

HOMESCHOOLING

A Hope for America

Edited by
Carl Watner

Foreword by
John Taylor Gatto

HOMESCHOOLING A HOPE FOR AMERICA

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Dedicated to:

All those parents and children who light their candles
against the darkness;

Hans Sherrer,
Who suggested this anthology;

and

Julie,
Who put up with it.

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Preface

A Definition of Freedom

By Julie Watner

Freedom is a mental condition – a condition of the spirit. All of us are free, if we but choose to acknowledge it. To borrow from Rose Wilder Lane, freedom is control of self. The essence of your “self” is your mind, soul, and spirit. We all are always free to change our thoughts, improve our knowledge and understanding, change our attitudes and beliefs – the inner part of each of us. We do need more folks to recognize that they already are FREE!

Liberty is a condition of the physical body: the absence of physical restraints. We seek liberty to use our resources, time, intelligence, and energy in the most beneficial (to us) way.

A productive, healthy society of freedom-minded and liberty-minded individuals is not to be confused with a libertine one. The conditions of liberty and freedom, above all, require individual responsibility in every phase of life. Each of us must take the consequences of our actions, good and bad. This is not easy, especially with our Big Brother the State standing by to present at least the illusion of “help” with every aspect of our lives.

Because the root of the problem (irresponsibility) is so ingrained, trying to convince others to live the freedom ideas through slogans, speeches, and hype is usually short on results. At best they provide the spark which causes an individual to seek out new information.

The “library of freedom” – books, pamphlets, newspapers, and magazines – not only documents man’s quest from ancient times forward, but also is an important, longer lasting way to spread the word and fan the spark of interest into a flame.

But “plain-Jane” and unexciting as it sounds, I believe the most effective way to spread the freedom idea is to educate ourselves and raise our children to be honest, knowledgeable, confident, responsible lovers of freedom – to light a single candle. If each one of us lights another candle, and each of those follows suit, the freedom ideas will grow from a quiet bonfire to a WILDFIRE engulfing everything in its path.

Living in an environment of liberty and freedom is akin to being a parent – it is the best of times; it is the worst of times. With neither can you ever relax

your vigilance, there is always work to be done, you are always being called upon to exercise new skills, and improve upon old ones. There is a tremendous amount of worry involved, also discouragement and uncertainty. On the other hand, it is hard to convey to a non-parent, just as to a statist, the joys, rewards, exhilaration, and satisfactions that make the responsibilities worthwhile. You just have to have faith, jump in, and DO IT!

[Editor's Note: This essay was the winner in a contest sponsored by The Customer Company. The stated object of a one-page essay was to define freedom and suggest the best way to implement it.]

(The Voluntaryist, No. 70, p. 8, October 1994)

Foreword

Losing Coherence

By John Taylor Gatto

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An editorial essay in the *Financial Times* for January 24, 2007, still haunts me. It raised the possibility that America's problems aren't caused by bad decisions or hostile adversaries, but by a force worse than either. The U. S. is "losing its coherence," the editorial said. It has forgotten that to be a real nation it must first be an extended family with many common purposes.

America has broken from its founding purposes and traditions, and is floundering without clear direction. Once again, it needs to figure out some good reason for being a nation at all. So said the *Financial Times*. Presumably just bombing poor countries and making bankers, drug, and insurance companies rich isn't enough.

I wondered who these rich people were to tell me that my country wasn't a country. Emotionally disturbed men and women weren't coherent. A trailer park in a hurricane wasn't coherent. My desk is hardly ever coherent. But my country? It was absurd!

Yet the judgment keeps returning to haunt me. Could it be a reasonable way to see the crazy events of the past several decades: continuous warfare as a foreign policy; presidents turned out of office by popular outrage; unprovoked attacks on countries barely out of the medieval age; disastrous financial speculations by conservative banks and corporations; the maintenance of overseas prison camps and torture operations; franchising out school lunches to McDonald's, and much, much more.

This wasn't the land of the free that I grew up in. Were we indeed a loosely bonded collection of interests masquerading as a nation?

A scary thought, but twenty years before the *Financial Times* evoked that image, E. D. Hirsch, writing in the national best-seller, *Cultural Literacy*, accused institutional schooling of deadening childrens' minds by imposing incoherence on the curriculum. No connection was made between subjects, and there was a lack of pattern within a given subject itself.

On March 26, 2007, *Time* magazine published the results of a BBC poll of 28,389 respondents from 29 countries. When asked to rank five nations having the best influence on the planet, and five having the worst, Canada finished at the top of the "best" group, and the U. S. finished at the bottom of the worst, after Israel and Iran.

I grew to manhood in that golden decade after World War II when we were universally beloved, so I was doubly disturbed by the close temporal association of this widespread condemnation and *Time's* charge of incoherence. Was there some connection among being powerful, being incoherent, and being a bad neighbor? Could this fatal chemistry account for the dramatic shift in global respect? Respondents called us greedy, not fair-minded; and legalistic but not moral. They said we approached other nations as bullies and hypocrites and liars.

On November 30, 2007, the Justice Department issued figures showing America with the highest percentage of its population in jail. One hundred and ninety-seven countries were surveyed. That was six times higher than China's rate of imprisonment. It is six times likelier an American, living in America, will end up in jail than a Chinese, living in China.

Is locking up so many citizens a sign of incoherence?

On to medicine. Across the Mexican border medicine can be purchased at one-third of its cost in the U. S. This is the same medicine manufactured by the American drug companies accustomed to gouging Americans back home, and packaged in the same familiar boxes and bottles. State of the art dental work is available in Mexico, too, in luxurious surroundings near the border, for about 40 percent of stateside prices. According to the television program, "60 Minutes," complicated operations like a heart by-pass can be had in state-of-the-art facilities in India and elsewhere for one-third their U. S. cost.

Is fleecing your sick neighbors a sign of incoherence?

On to military affairs. More than 5000 young Americans, mostly from poor families, are dead and over 30,000 crippled as a result of an unprovoked invasion and occupation of Iraq, an invasion justified by false information. This adventure has diverted a trillion and a half dollars from productive uses.

Is sending thousands to die, tens of thousands to be maimed, and stealing national wealth for reasons beyond ordinary comprehension, one more sign of incoherence?

Fifty-three percent of all U. S. doctoral degrees in engineering go to people from foreign nations; thirty-five percent of all tech firms in Silicon Valley are owned by Chinese and Indian nationals; major building contracts can be filled by foreign firms at approximately 17 percent of the price American firms charge. Bill Gates, without a college degree of his own, lobbies the American government energetically to allow him to hire foreign technicians – trained at Microsoft facilities in China and India – in preference to Americans.

Is draining work from your own nation and sending it abroad a sign of incoherence?

The U. S. nation is by far the fattest nation on earth. Sixty percent of the population is overweight, and thirty percent is obese, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Sixteen percent of our active military is obese. Nine million young people between the ages of six and eighteen are obese. One in three kids born after the year 2000 will develop diabetes, the leading cause of blindness in America and the leading cause of amputations. But 23,000 public schools have fat, salt, and sugar-rich fast food franchises located inside school doors – and all of them immobilize the young for long stretches of time when such diets and physical regimens are known precursors of diabetic disaster. The Big Gulp and the Mega Meal are given a pass by our official custodians of school children.

Is poisoning the nation's children to build the bottom line a sign of incoherence?

What fraction of national incoherence arises from America's romance with Prussian-inspired schooling? What fraction of national incoherence arises from bell-driven, test-driven, pedagogue-driven, confinement schooling dedicated to fashioning obedient employees rather than independent, self-reliant citizens? What fraction of national incoherence arises from dysfunctional schooling conceived and constructed to resonate in harmony with an economy increasingly dysfunctional, one which stands upon the shaky foundations of financial trickery, war-making, drug-vending, factory agriculture, and the manufacture of a variety of toxic illusions to survive?

2.

The existing rituals between childhood and adulthood don't work any more. We need to re-think the rules from scratch because our very coherence is at stake. The basic formula of institutional schooling has to be rejected: confinement with state-certified strangers in an environment of constant propaganda, outright lies, intimidation, enforced passivity and silence, obedience, memorization, disconnected bits of data, and paper/pencil testing.

What would happen if we let the imagination and energy of the young free again – as it was in Ben Franklin's day – free to add value directly to the world around them as the young did when America was coherent? What if our kids were allowed to grow up as complete people? What if they were taught the truth of things instead of having their heads filled with sound bites? What if they learned hard skills instead of "subjects"?

What if we stopped filling their heads with the illusions which create our hall of mirrors society?

We need, I think, to reach backwards in time to the better open-source educational way America enjoyed when we dominated the inventiveness of the world; back to the time before the rigid, militaristic procedures of universal schooling foreclosed our imaginations.

Ordinary Americans have been marginalized, trivialized, disenfranchised, and disconnected from reality for so long by institutional schooling it's no wonder our society has turned incoherent. We are horribly divided from one another – to the extent Peter Applebome of *The New York Times* could write on February 22, 2010, that the “shared middle” of American life was gone, that all we had left was football, “March Madness,” “American Idol,” and “the recognition that half of us hate the other half.”

For about a hundred years now we've managed our economy and social order by turning our young into “human resources,” resources safe for a corporate society to employ for its own projects.

Structured schooling is the principal tool used to convert independence, imagination, and energy of the young into this industrial commodity. For many reasons the corporatizing of American affairs seemed like a good idea when it was happening; it conferred significant advantages on the people who manage things. “Social efficiency” in a corporate era required all children to be drained from the living community and locked away for long-term conditioning. Only inadequate people find the principal meaning of their existence in “consumption” and yet it is just such men and women who give mass producers the best chance of profit. Thus, blocking the path to self-reliance and critical thinking in future customers is only good strategy in a corporate economy. Schooling is the tactical realization of this principle.

Until recently this formula was the key to corporate prosperity and national power, but that time is forever passed, its golden strategy overtaken by India, China, and others who can do the same thing better than we can because they have no national traditions of liberty and independence to balk an efficient application of official discipline. But the residue from our own now finished pinnacle of corporate success is an enormous parasitic mass of lifelong children, an incoherent citizenry created by institutional schooling. The mass grows larger year after year because, like the little mill that ground salt, the momentum of institutional schooling cannot be stopped as it presses on in its incoherent way, structuring childhood to fit a model demanded by mass production and corporate coherence a hundred years ago.

In his book, *The Trophy Kids Grow Up*, Ron Alson describes the products of familiar school training. They dislike, he says, the idea of work; one-third don't even try to engage the jobs market. They are temperamentally unprepared for the troubling circumstances of the moment, where unemployment and underemployment are the highest since the 1930s, where one in seven mortgages is delinquent and one in four homes worth less than the mortgage.

They blame others for their difficulties; expect someone else to fix any problems they encounter. They lack independence, entrepreneurialism, leadership skills, and problem-solving ability. They need almost constant direction. They flounder without precise guidelines.

In a harsh economic environment, one demanding adaptability, perseverance, enterprise, and humility – not self-esteem – our recent graduates expect rewards without exchanging successful performance for them. That shouldn't surprise anyone; schools don't ask for performance, only for memory.

Evidence that a revolution is brewing has been available since the late 1960s when the Vietnamese War was halted by the uncoordinated efforts of millions of young people taking direct street action. Since then, other signs of orthodoxy being rejected have not been hard to find. Virtually all the top names in the computer industry – Gates, Jobs, Dell, Allen, Wozniak, Ellison, etc. – avoided college. The movie industry has been rocked by the sudden appearance of You-Tube, and thousands of amateur filmmakers whose product is inherently more interesting than studio films. Blogs have gutted the newspaper industry. Teenage Shawn Fanning sent shudders through the world of commercial music with his invention of Napster. The book mafia is being broken on the rack of Amazon, Google, the iPod, and the Internet in general. The whole notion of patents and copyrights is virtually nonsense in the planet of the young (and in mainland China).

Our well-schooled social reality is crippling the nation. The day of the expert is over. Building a coherent society is beyond the power of official leadership. Coherence can only come from the bottom up now, so cynical have the young become to their elders' supposed wisdom. "This is the time of the sweat bath, of oceans boiling over, of underground explosions, of the planet whirled away, of exterminations sure to follow," as 19 year old Frenchman, Arthur Rimbaud told us.

Institutional schooling has made us incoherent. We don't hang together any more because the corporate narrative, disseminated through classrooms, demands we never stop seeing one another as competitors, as

people to be ranked from best to worst. Slick operators promote pop quizzes, competitive questioning, class divisions, tests, standardized instruments, and gold stars. All are training exercises setting us up as patsies isolated from one another. They divide and conquer by rendering our bonds with one another incoherent. The managers of society constructed this system – they are unlikely to shut it down. In such a pickle, you can't do much for everybody, but you can do a whole lot for yourself, your family, and the people around you – just by making yourself whole, complete, educated. Just be sure you don't trust any official to do that for you.

A moment's reflection should tell you that the coherence of a free society – unlike the coherence of an ant colony or beehive – depends upon the maximum number of individuals and families self-organizing. This was the genius of the Congregational religion in colonial America – no two congregations were quite alike. In each, the style and content of worship arose from the particular nature of each assemblage. The Anglican establishment had all the status, the money, and the soldiers, but Dissenters and Nonconformists could think for themselves. They adapted to feedback from local conditions in a way so superior to those compelled to follow a rulebook written and amended far away, that the British orthodoxy lost its way and collapsed.

Only in a self-organizing society – common among the ranks of homeschoolers – can coherence be trusted to be genuine and not merely a temporary result of coercion, habit, training, pretense, and fawning before a Master. Only then can it be trusted to endure.

In the slavish ant colony America has increasingly become, thanks to excessive government action, Carl Watner is correct to title his book, *A Hope for America*. In the sad position we have reached from our promising beginnings, the political state and the anti-entrepreneurial society are driven to imposing incoherence – turning us one against the other, dividing to conquer – even to the extent of setting parents and children against one another. All this is done in order to help the social machinery of State action prevail. We need working models of a different way to reflect upon, and to urge our children to follow. Far and away the most successful of these is the American homeschooling movement, perhaps the most successful populist undertaking in our national history.

Mr. Watner sets before the reader a long buffet table of observations and insights about the subjects of freedom, liberty, and how these prizes are won or lost. You may read this from cover to cover at a sitting, as I did, or dip into its bounty one ingredient at a time – in either case you will find

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your complacency challenged with a broad medley of ideas. A rich assortment of provocative thinkers will be paraded before you in these pages, to argue with or embrace as you see fit. Many you may have never heard of, but they all make the case for self-responsibility, self-control, personal integrity, and homeschooling. The essay on the Amish, which describes all these elements, is alone worth the price of the book.

But enough chit-chat.

Dig in!

John Taylor Gatto

Solitude Retreat

Oxford, New York

May 1, 2010

(John Taylor Gatto was named New York City Teacher of the Year in 1989, 1990, and 1991, and New York State Teacher of the Year in 1991. On April 3, 2009, The Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University credited him with inventing the expression “dumbing us down” and spreading it worldwide with his book of that title and his lectures.)

Introduction

What Might Have Been - What Might Be

By Carl Watner

The responsibility of parents for the education of their children is deeply rooted in the spirit and history of America. In his book, *Is Public Education Necessary?*, Samuel Blumenfeld points out that there was no mention of education, much less “public/government” education in either the Declaration of Independence or the federal Constitution. Even if one were to argue that education fell within the jurisdiction of the states, rather than the national government, one is hard pressed to explain why only two of the constitutions of the original thirteen colonies (Pennsylvania and North Carolina) mentioned the subject. This absence of concern for what is today deemed to be one of the most central of government functions (both on the federal and state levels) is not too hard to explain.

Education, both before and after the American Revolution, was certainly not the responsibility of governments. The educational backgrounds of the signers of the Declaration and Constitution attest to the richness and diversity of the voluntary educational environment of the time. Their schooling encompassed “every conceivable combination of parental, church, apprenticeship, school, tutorial, and self-education.” As Blumenfeld observes: “George Washington was educated by his father and half-brother, Benjamin Franklin was taught to read by his father and attended a private school for writing and arithmetic,” and “Thomas Jefferson studied Latin and Greek under a tutor.” [1] Charles Dabney, in his book *Universal Education In The South*, reports that “a great advance in educational enterprises of a private and ecclesiastical character followed” the years after the American Revolution. “The wealthy established private schools. Academies and colleges were started wherever a few pupils could be gathered together and teachers found. A new ideal of education was in the making,” [2] In 1798, Joseph Lancaster opened his first free school in London, England, followed by its spread to New York City in 1805. [3] In short, the “men who founded the United States were educated under the freest conditions possible” and it would have been strange to most of them, indeed, to think that government should have been a provider of education. [4]

This is our ideal, the “what might have been” for American education,

and our hope for what might be. Yet, as every 21st Century reader knows, educational freedom in America has been nearly destroyed, so much so that even the validity of homeschooling has been challenged in many states. This collection of eclectic articles from *The Voluntaryist*, which has been published since 1982, is designed to make you think about educational freedom and political statism. It takes the following points for its main theme:

... Government schools are paid for by compulsory taxes. (Why is it assumed that the majority of parents would not willingly pay for their children's education? Why are they presumed guilty? If taxes must be collected to pay for public schools, why not collect them only from those who refuse to educate their children and necessitate such schools?)

... Government schools depend on the coercion of compulsory attendance laws. (Why is it assumed that the majority of parents would not willingly educate their children? Why are they presumed guilty? If coercion must be used, why not apply compulsory attendance laws only to those parents who refuse to educate their children? To teachers and state educators we ask: Do you think nobody would willingly entrust their children to you? Why do you have to collect your pupils by compulsion?) [5]

... Before the advent of government schools, parents were primarily responsible for the education of their children.

... The home has always been the main place where education occurred; and the parents were often the primary instructors of their children.

... Although restricted by every conceivable law and political regulation, it is the natural and common law right of the parents to direct the education of their children.

... Parents have a moral duty to educate their offspring. However, a child has no right to an education. (The common law held it as no offense for a parent not to educate his child.) [6]

... Government schools are designed to indoctrinate students in statolatry, in the worship of the State as the provider of all 'good' things. (A tax-supported educational system is the life-like representative of the totalitarian state.) [7]

... Someone or some institution must control the child. (Shall we have a free society with parental control of the child's education or an authoritarian society with state-controlled education?) [8]

... If there is any hope for America as a beacon of liberty and freedom it is to be found in home education.

How does voluntaryism relate to education? Voluntaryism is the

philosophic doctrine that all the affairs of mankind should be voluntary. No one has the right to force another peaceful person to act as he or she wishes. Voluntaryism comes about naturally if no one does anything to prevent it. Voluntaryism was a term that originated in the early 1800s in England to identify those who advocated voluntary, as opposed to State, support of religion. It was later extended to those who opposed the coercive collection of taxes. Ultimately, those who shared this position realized that government would probably receive little revenue if it did not threaten jail time or confiscation of property to collect its taxes. In short, voluntaryists question the legitimacy of coercive political government because it initiates violence against those who would decline its protection because they want none, or would provide their own protection, or hire some other organization to provide them with protection. Furthermore, by its monopolization of services, government violates the rights of those individuals or groups of individual who might choose to offer competing services to those offered by the government. Many voluntaryists see a parallel between government churches and government schools. If it is not proper to support a State church by compulsory attendance laws and coercive taxes, why should it be proper to support State schools in a similar manner? Why is one's spiritual health any less important than one's educational development? [9]

In a free society, no one owes anybody else food, shelter, clothing, medical care, or spiritual or intellectual growth. Respect for individual rights means that some may have more than they need, some less, but each person is or should be secure in what is theirs. Only then, whether they have lots or little, may they be disposed to be charitable or miserly with what they have. Voluntaryism in education follows from each person's self-ownership and rightful control of their property. Parents nurture their children. Teachers, tutors, and masters of apprentices offer their services. No coercive outside agency tells parents when, and where, and what and how to teach. This lack of any centralized agency directing education permits a tremendous variety of what to teach, as well as how to teach. Voluntaryism does not guarantee success, but it does allow for each family to experiment and find out what is best for them. Voluntaryism does not exhibit the one-size fits all approach of government schooling. There is nothing to prevent what works for one family to be imitated and copied, while a government monopoly almost assures us that mediocrity will rule. Parental-directed schooling, unlike government schooling, is not dominated by political considerations and compromises between competing interests and radically different constituencies.

All teaching and teachers are laden with values and beliefs. [10] Education can never be free of dogma. This is an inescapable fact of reality. Thus the question becomes: “Would one rather have a single educational monopolist deciding what is taught and how it is taught, or would one rather have each individual parent and family decide what they will teach or have taught to their children?” Family indoctrination may be just as thorough and enslaving as state indoctrination, but that situation would be far better than if “a universal education agency” were to have indoctrinated everybody in its dogma. As one advocate of diversity in indoctrination explained: if different families indoctrinate in different dogmas, “the dogmatic, indoctrinated product of one family’s indoctrination will grow up to profess a different dogma than that of another family’s indoctrinated offspring. Then, in social interactions among the various indoctrinated, differences of belief and lack of universality of dogma will become apparent to all, undermining in many the felt necessity of the dogmatic beliefs they were trained to hold.” The fact that no monopolist can instill its dogma on a captive audience insures that whatever dogmas are taught will clash in a manner that will make many question their beliefs and lead them to rectify their mistaken beliefs, if they come to that conclusion. But “people in a society where universal indoctrination has been practiced would be less likely to discover the inhibition on their freedom since everyone, everywhere will attest to the putatively obvious truth of everything that person believes.” [11] And in a society where government directs the people’s education it is a certainty that the people will be taught that voluntaryism in education is dangerous and that government education is best. Who could imagine the government criticizing itself?

Thus, it is readily apparent that the public school is a tool of the State, an idea going back at least as far as Plato. Those who direct the schools “control a character-producing institution” that is an instrument of the “ruling elite to maintain and enhance their power.” [12] Public education is simply one of the primary means of molding American children into tax-paying, law-abiding American adults, who rarely question the nature and legitimacy of their own government. As Jonathan Kozol notes: “The first and primary function of the U. S. public schools is not to educate good people, but good citizens. It is the function which we call in enemy nations state indoctrination.” [13] John Taylor Gatto expands on this theme calling government schools Weapons of Mass Instruction:

[M]andatory public education in this country ... was useful in creating not only a harmless electorate and a servile labor force

but also a virtual herd of mindless consumers. In time a great number of industrial titans came to recognize the enormous profits to be had by cultivating and tending such a herd via public education, School trains children to be employees and consumers. ... [W]ake up to what our schools really are: laboratories of experimentation on young minds, drill centers for the habits and attitudes that corporate [and political] society demand... . [I]ts real purpose is to turn them into servants. [14]

When homeschooling parents have been challenged in court for violating the state's education law, rarely are the educational achievements of their children called into question. The accomplishments of the children (whether they have met the state requirements for their grade levels or not) are usually beside the point. The welfare of the child is not the concern of the State. The courts do not consider how well the child is educated, but only whether or not the child is receiving a government-approved education and if the appropriate rules and regulations were followed. [15] If the State were truly concerned with neglected and illiterate children, it would take corrective action to save those children its own educational system has failed to teach to read or write.

It is likely that some children receive a worse education under a government regime than they would in the absence of political laws. This is consistent with the nature of government intervention. Even from the point of view of its supporters, government action often makes conditions worse than before it interfered. If we examine the "Six Political Illusions" enunciated by James L. Payne we can begin to understand how this happens:

1. Since government has no funds of its own, "money spent on government programs must be taken from citizens who have good and useful purposes for their own funds. Therefore, all government spending programs injure these good and useful activities."
2. Government is based on the exercise of physical force to accomplish its ends. "Its taxes and regulations rely on the threat of inflicting physical harm on those who do not cooperate."
3. Government programs "have high overhead costs. Goods or services provided through a tax and spend system end up costing several times as much as they would if citizens obtained these good or services directly" on the market.
4. "Money is only one factor in success. If the motivation and abilities of recipients are not suitable ... government spending will be useless, or can do more harm than good."

5. “Government has no superior wisdom. Government officials are ordinary people, as prone to bias, intolerance, greed, and error as anyone” else.

6. Government would have us think that it is a problem-solving institution, but it cannot duplicate the “the creative actions of individuals, families, neighborhoods, groups, and businesses. Problem-solving efforts by government almost invariably impair the energy and capacity of the voluntary sphere.” [16]

It is easy to see how every one of these illusions applies to government education, and why voluntaryists are more concerned with the means than the ends. Voluntaryists understand Mahatma Gandhi’s insight that “if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” If they rely on voluntarism and don’t use coercion to educate their children, they not only set their children a moral, non-violent example (not relying on tax funds which are forcibly collected), but they generally do as good, if not better, a practical job of preparing their children for life than the State. Voluntarism has no formal guidelines that will dictate what kinds of education will take place in a free society. So long as the means are peaceful, respectful of self-ownership and property titles, the ends cannot be criticized from the voluntaryist perspective. This is not to imply that the only standard of judging human behavior is whether or not it is voluntary. Certainly some behavior may be irrational, vicious, immoral, religious, irreligious, (etc., etc.) but the first question the voluntaryist asks is: Is it truly voluntary? This is why the voluntaryist objects to government provision of dispute settlement, police services, schools, etc. Such services may be essential to human survival, but it is not essential that they be provided by government on a coercive basis. There is no logical, epistemological, or societal justification for forcing goods or services upon unwilling customers. The political attempts of 2009-2010 to impose universal national healthcare is just the latest government-mandated service being forced upon people (those who have to pay taxes to support other people’s medical care, and those who would prefer to make provisions for their own healthcare).

Education in a free society is the responsibility of every parent. Some parents will be irresponsible. Some will be responsible for the education of their own children. Others may choose to become responsible for the education of children that are not their own. That is the beauty of freedom. Each person must inevitably make their own choice, or choose to make none at all (though indeed, they have no choice; reality will make it for them if they fail to make a choice themselves). The kind of character we

develop individually goes far in determining what kind of collective society we shall have. But after all is said and done, the only thing we, individually, can do is “to present society with one improved unit.” As Albert Jay Nock put it, “Ages of experience testify that the only way society can be improved is by the individualist method; ... that is, the method of each one doing his best to improve one.” [17] This is the quiet or patient way of changing society because it concentrates upon bettering the character of men and women as individuals. As the individual units change, the improvement in society will take care of itself. In other words, if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself”.

What better description of homeschooling could one pen?

The Voluntarist insight into education offers a unique and seldom heard point of view about children, schooling, and the State. Many of these essays may make you fume but please let them help you think through the issues. Above all else, as Shakespeare wrote: “To thine own self be true: And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.”

End Notes

- [1] Samuel L. Blumenfeld, *Is Public Education Necessary?*, Old Greenwich: The Devin-Adair Company, 1981, pp. 20-21.
- [2] Charles Dabney, *Universal Education In The South*, Volume I: From the Beginnings to 1900, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936, p. 3.
- [3] Erica Carle, “Education Without Taxation,” *The Freeman*, March 1962, pp. 48-55 at pp. 48 and 50.
- [4] Blumenfeld, op. cit., p. 21.
- [5] Murray Rothbard, *Education, Free and Compulsory: The Individual's Education*, Wichita: Center for Independent Education, 1972, p. 17 citing Isabel Paterson, *The God of the Machine*. See Chapter XXI of the Caxton Printers edition, 1964, p. 274.
- [6] Robert P. Baker, “Statute Law and Judicial Interpretation,” in William F. Rickenbacker (editor), *The Twelve-Year Sentence*, LaSalle: Open Court, 1974, pp. 97-135 at p. 100.
- [7] Rothbard, op. cit., p. 15.
- [8] Ibid., p. 11.
- [9] See Herbert Spencer, *The Proper Sphere of Government* (a series of twelve letters published in *The Nonconformist*, beginning June 1842, and reprinted as a pamphlet in 1843). Especially see the conclusion to Letter VIII. Available on the

worldwide web in the Library of Economics and Liberty at <http://www.econlib.org/library/LFBooks/Spencer/spnMvS6.html>

[10] Gerrit H. Wormhoudt, "Supreme Court Decisions," in William F. Rickenbacker (editor), *The Twelve-Year Sentence*, LaSalle: Open Court, 1974, pp. 61-94 at p. 81.

[11] J. Roger Lee, "Limits on Universal Education," in Tibor R. Machan (editor), *Education in a Free Society*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000, pp. 1-25 at pp. 23-24.

[12] Joel H. Spring, "Sociological and Political Ruminations," in William F. Rickenbacker (editor), *The Twelve-Year Sentence*, LaSalle: Open Court, 1974, pp. 139-159 at pp. 140-142.

[13] Jonathan Kozol, *The Night Is Dark and I am Far From Home*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975, p.1.

[14] John Taylor Gatto, *Weapons of Mass Instruction: A School Teacher's Journey Through the Dark World of Compulsory Schooling*, Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2009, pp. xix-xx, and p. xxii. Gatto admonishes: "School trains children to be employees and consumers; teach your own to be leaders and adventurers. School trains children to obey reflexively; teach your own to think critically and independently." (p. xxii) After reciting many success stories of 'unschooled' but educated children, he concludes "that genius [among children] is common as dirt. We suppress genius because we haven't yet figured out how to manage a population of educated men and women. The solution, I think, is simple and glorious. Let them manage themselves." (p. xxiii)

[15] Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-131.

[16] James L. Payne, *Six Political Illusions*, privately distributed manuscript dated November 19, 2009. See Chapter VII, p. 107.

[17] Albert Jay Nock, *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943, p. 307.

Section I

Homeschooling!

The right of parents to direct the education of their children is a natural one stemming from their responsibilities as mother and father of their offspring. In constitutional terms, it falls under the penumbra of unenumerated rights and powers referred to in the 9th and 10th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Just because home education and parental rights are not mentioned or guaranteed in the main body of state or federal constitutions does not mean that such rights do not exist or that homeschooling is not legal unless it is first permitted by statute law. In other words, parents do not and should not need government permission to homeschool their young.

Homeschooling has occurred as long as there have been children and parents; whether it was early *homo sapien* teaching their children how to hunt and start fires; or whether it was Almonzo and Laura Wilder teaching their daughter in a prairie dug out. Homeschooling is a right by common law. Human beings grew up, developed, and matured long before formal schools, whether private, church or governmental, came into existence. Schools, as such, are not necessary to the development of the full human being. As Helen and Mark Hegener write of their children: “We’ve raised five children and none of them has ever gone to school. They are all bright, intelligent, fun to be around, and determined to chart their own course through life. They won’t wait to be told what to do, or what they can do.”

In “Why Homeschool?” I try to explain my reasons for homeschooling my own children. In short, I want as little to do with the State as possible. That means my rejection of government birth certificates, social security numbers, voter registration, and any other number of government interferences in my family’s life. Some, such as schooling, I can distance myself from - at least partially. As I try to point out in my correspondence with Helen Hegener, the local, state, and federal governments take money from my family (real property and sales taxes, being two examples) even though I do not avail myself of their schools. Since governments are inherently invasive institutions, monopolizing geographic areas and extorting revenue from those who live there, I wish to have as little to do with the State as possible. Furthermore, one must recognize that even if government were to have nothing to do with schooling, its very existence must still have an impact on families and schooling. Whatever monies the government coerces from me to pay for courts, roads, police, etc., is that

much less money I have to spend on my children's education or otherwise as I see fit.

In his article on "Real Education" attorney James Ostrowski points out that "government control over education is the ultimate foundation of statism today." Ultimately, we are faced with three alternatives: "revolt, reform, or withdrawal." Armed resistance, as Mormon homeschooler John Singer found out is not a possibility. Political reform of the government schools is not an answer either: no matter how much you change public schools they are still controlled by the government. "Which leaves one alternative: withdrawal." We southerners are still fighting the civil war. We may have lost the first one, but when it comes to public schools, secession is a viable option, Long live secession from government schools. It's our birthright; it's our freedom; and it's our children we are struggling to save from the idea that the state is a legitimate institution which may claim their lives, their fortunes, and their honor.

On Our Children and Their Education

By Helen and Mark Hegener

None of the calls to environmental action ever go quite far enough. Unless some very real, very lasting changes are made, and soon, it won't matter much whether or not we've saved the whales, or the spotted owls, or the forests. We will have lost something much more dear and precious to us all: Our children.

While most of today's best and brightest are thinking up new ways to save the planet, their children are being indoctrinated by the government public school system. Make no mistake about indoctrination: in *The Night Is Dark And I Am Far From Home* (1990) Jonathan Kozol wrote, "The first goal and primary function of the US public school is not to educate good people, but good citizens. It is the function which we call – in enemy nations – 'state indoctrination'."

Schools are places where children learn how to submit to authority, to bury their yearnings for free expression and to submit to regimentation and disciplined monotony. Substantive questioning of authority is discouraged. This process often entails the outright destruction of a child's intellectual capabilities; people who know too much are not likely to be submissive and willing to conform when it goes against reason and common sense, as much of what happens in school does. Knowledge is power, and those who hold the power are not always willing to share all of the knowledge.

So why do we continue in this mad headlong rush? Because we, as a society, have been led to believe that schools, whether public schools, traditional private schools, or alternative schools in their many forms, are necessary to the learning process. In fact, they are only necessary to the social and political process.

We fully expect this battle to be twice as difficult as the battle to save the environment, because it's extremely difficult to convince most people that there's really anything wrong. People have an overriding attitude which says "School was good enough for me, and it's good enough for my kids, too."

In his book *Freedom and Beyond* (1972), the author and educator John Holt put his finger on a significant piece of the problem when he wrote, "A large part of our problem is that few of us really believe in freedom. As a slogan, it is fine. But we don't understand it as a process or mechanism with which or within which people can work or live. We have had in our

own lives so little experience of freedom, except in the most trivial situations, that we can hardly imagine how it might work.”

We’ve raised five children and none of them has ever gone to school. They are all bright, intelligent, fun to be around, and determined to chart their own course through life. They won’t wait to be told what to do, or what they can do. We wish more children had the opportunity to grow up the way they did, to make decisions about their own lives, to make mistakes and to learn from them, to grow in their own ways instead of being processed and labeled and spit out the other end of the assembly line called school.

How to proceed? Simply publishing this letter, and giving people a chance to think about this situation will be an important first step. We intend to keep writing, and perhaps together we and others can make a difference. Thanks for whatever you can do to help.

[Editor’s Note: The above article appeared as a letter-to-the-editor in the May 1992 issue of *Real Good News* (966 Mazzoni Street, Ukiah, CA 95482). Real Goods is a purveyor of energy independence products and operator of the Institute for Independent Living. The authors of this article are editors and publishers of *Home Education Magazine*, Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855. One year subscription – \$ 32.00, 6 issues.]

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 58, p. 8, October 1992)

Why Homeschool?

Excerpts from Correspondence Between Helen Hegener and Carl Watner

Mark and Helen Hegener are the homeschooling parents of five children and owners of Home Education Press, which publishes *Home Education Magazine*, a bimonthly homeschooling magazine, and several books on homeschooling and alternative education. Their newest book is *Alternatives In Education*. They have been active in the homeschool movement since 1983, and have been featured speakers at homeschooling conferences across the nation. (Their magazine is available from Box 1083, Tonasket, Wa. 98855 (6 issues – \$24, current issue \$4.50)).

After the publication of my article, “Who Controls the Children?” in the December 1992 issue of *The Voluntarist* (Whole No. 59), I wrote the Hegeners to see if they would be interested in publishing the story of John and Vickie Singer’s struggle to assert their parental rights to homeschool. They were, and it appeared as “John Singer: Martyr or Fool?” in the July-August 1993 issue of *Home Education Magazine*. In that same letter of December 19th, I also mentioned that:

Another short article I have in mind is one dealing with “Why I Homeschool.” Even if the State did a perfectly wonderful job of educating children in their schools, I would object on conscientious grounds. I object to the compulsory aspects of state schooling: attendance laws, taxation, and penalties for failure to comply with their statutes. I believe this is a completely different perspective – one probably never presented in your magazine.

Helen responded that this was her “personal reason for homeschooling our five kids,” and that she and her husband were “more convinced now than we were then (back in the mid-1980s) that the state has absolutely no business telling parents how to raise their children. We haven’t been writing as much about these issues lately as we probably should, but they’re still there, simmering on the back burner.”

On February 13, 1993, I wrote Helen that:

While we both oppose ALL state interference in the realm of the family and schooling, I believe my position goes much further, and hence, implies much more than you see.

For example, take state-mandated birth certificates. In most

states, the statutes regarding the reporting of births fall under the Dept. of Health and Vital Statistics. Compulsory birth registration would not be justified by statist supporters as an intervention in the realm of schooling, but rather as a requirement to help “promote the general welfare” by enabling the state to identify, process immunization records, and count its population. Compulsory registration does constitute an invasion of the family, but how many people – including homeschoolers – perceive it that way? Very few, I suspect.

Take another example: taxation by county, state, or federal governments. Isn’t taxation an invasion of the family? Money spent on taxes is that much less money the family has to spend on education, health, food, recreation, etc. Of course, I also believe taxation is theft because it is collected under the threat of personal imprisonment or property confiscation if not paid.

The point I am trying to make is two-fold.

First, no matter how small and limited a government starts out (like the American republic in 1787) it inevitably seeks more and more power and control over its people. Taxes grow and grow, and interventions in all areas of life take place. Witness our situation today. We are living in a dictatorship “in all but name.” (See my article by this title in the June 1993 *The Voluntaryist*.)

My second point is that the existence of any coercive government (no matter how small or limited) means that such a coercive institution must of necessity have an impact on the people it governs. Even if there were a constitutional amendment separating education from the state, I do not believe it is possible to separate the State from the family or schooling. If you have a state, it must have an effect on people and their affairs. If there is a State, it is impossible to separate it from anything.

You may not agree with my conclusion that we do not need a coercive state to oversee our affairs, but I do hope you follow the logic of my argument, and understand the consistency that holds it together. While I agree with your position that the state should not intervene in schooling or family affairs, doesn’t this imply that the state may coercively interfere in other areas, such as providing national defense, or providing roads (just to take two examples)? My argument starts out the other way. I am opposed to the use of all coercion, both by the state or private parties – whether it be providing national defense, building roads, providing a common

money, educating its citizens, etc., etc. Most people have their favorite areas, in which they support government intervention. I have none.

If we don't take a direct, frontal approach to opposing the state, it seems to me that we are forever fighting brush fires, and thus only opposing specific areas of intervention, such as in homeschooling.

Helen answered that letter by writing back to me on March 29, 1993 that:

Regarding your point of opposition to all intervention by the state, I can agree on some levels, but I would ask how you define "the state." What comprises a "government, no matter how small or limited." Let's say that two people agree to a plan whereby one of them grows a nice garden and in the fall trades half his crop to the other for plowing his road all winter. Next year a third person joins, offering to supply firewood from his property to both for a share of the garden and getting his road plowed. And so on, until a dozen or more families are involved. At what particular point do these agreeably sharing neighbors become a "state" or a "government"? What determines whether these mutually beneficial arrangements are "good" or "bad": their size? Their usefulness to all those concerned? I see some perhaps overly simplified, but still valid parallels, and I would suggest that it's not the system that is necessarily at fault, but the potential for misuse by certain greedy individuals, which, of course, is magnified by the size of the "state" or "government." Unfortunately, their kind will always be with us, leading to the types of misuse that make us all willing to condemn bureaucracies, states, governments, or whatever.

We have no quarrel with schools, per se. Our argument is with the fact that they've been made compulsory, that for the vast majority of kids there is no escaping the ineptitude that passes for "schooling" these days. If they were run more like libraries – use what you want when you want to and leave the rest – we think they might actually be nice to have around. It's the way they've been twisted and reshaped into this monolithic bureaucracy that serves no one well that we're against.

I answered her question about how you define 'government' in my letter of April 3rd:

The ‘classic’ definition of a government is an institution which claims exclusive jurisdiction over a given piece of territory, exercises the power to tax, and monopolizes certain public services such as police, courts, and external defense. Your neighborhood group is not a government by this definition.

You write: “We have no quarrel with schools, per se. Our argument is the fact they’ve been made compulsory,” I infer that you object to compulsory attendance laws.

You continue: “If they (schools) were run more like libraries – use what you want when you want to and leave the rest – we think they might actually be nice to have around.”

The point I was trying to make in my earlier letter is that the compulsion in the State school system involves far more than just compulsory attendance laws. State schools are tax-supported and taxation is compulsory. I oppose compulsory attendance laws, but I also object to compulsory taxation to support the public schools. Even if attendance were not made compulsory, I would still oppose State schools – just as I oppose public libraries – because they are supported by force. Why shouldn’t public schools and public libraries receive their funding voluntarily, as do all other businesses and organizations in the free market?

The principle I am trying to demonstrate is that if it is wrong to use coercion to enforce attendance, it is just as wrong to use coercion to collect taxes. As a matter of consistency, if I can compel you to contribute to a school system that you would not voluntarily support, or to which you would not voluntarily send your children, then why shouldn’t I be able to compel you to school them in a manner that I prescribe. Or, if I can compel you to send your children to school, why shouldn’t I also be able to compel you to send them to the library for a fixed amount of time? And, as a practical matter, I believe that if we do not object to the tax-support that public schools receive, we (as a society) will never reduce or abandon the statist schools.

If I am not mistaken, no one in the home school movement has opposed State schools because they are tax-supported. If I am wrong, please tell me. This is an important issue to me, and I seem to be alone in pointing it out.

I know you are busy, but I hope you might briefly explain your position on the issue of schools, taxation, and compulsion. Or please tell me if you consider it a non-issue.

Helen answered that letter by writing back to me on May 11, 1993 that:

I've tried to figure out how to reply to your concerns, but the best I can come up with is that it doesn't seem as though the issues of taxation and schooling can be mixed in any reasonable way and made sense of. While you do make a valid point in your letter, they still seem to me to be separate issues. You're right, I can't think of anyone in the homeschooling movement who has objected to state schools on the basis of their being tax-supported. The best reason for this is a fairly simple one: traditional public schooling is so obviously bad for kids, and homeschooling is so obviously good for them, that most of the other concerns such as taxation and compulsion seem to be moot points. Valid, maybe, but moot to most of us in the homeschooling movement. We just go on about our lives and don't worry about the rest of it.

I know this is a non-answer, but maybe it will give you an idea of my standing on the whole question.

My letter to Helen on May 15, 1993 concluded our correspondence about homeschooling:

Homeschooling is an example of how the moral and the practical coincide. As you point out, there are plenty of practical reasons for homeschooling. In my opinion, there are plenty of moral reasons, too. (And in fact, I would argue that the practicality of homeschooling stems from its moral roots.) First of all, I believe each of us as parents should take a hands-on responsibility for the education of our children; not just a turning over of that responsibility to outside bureaucrats and teachers. The incentive is for 'us', as parents to do a better job. Second, I believe it is wrong to use compulsion and the coercive apparatus of the State to provide or supervise education in any manner whatsoever. The State strives to monopolize whatever it does, tends to destroy all competition, and has no healthy incentive to act efficiently or morally.

Really the main point I am trying to make is this: Is it ever proper for some people to steal from others – which is what happens when the State taxes its citizens for educational pursuits? I object to having my property taken from me by the State for educational and/or other purposes. Stealing is wrong, and we should object to it in principle.

Why Homeschool?

If you don't object to this happening now to all of us, how could you expect others to support you when you object to having your 'privilege' to homeschool taxed? It may sound like a ludicrous prediction, but I bet that homeschoolers will someday be socked with a special tax – just to discourage the practice.

Homeschooling gives us the opportunity to avoid having our children indoctrinated with State ideologies. But if we don't oppose statist dogma by pointing out that taxation is theft, that compulsion against peaceful people is wrong, – then we are merely helping to make our children more efficient slaves, not the aspiring free people they have a right and responsibility to become.

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 65, pp. 4-5, December 1993)

The Case for Persuasion: The Mind Cannot Be Forced

By Christine Tykeson

What do we do when we know homeschoolers who we genuinely think are neglecting their children's educational needs? I see two choices: force or persuasion. Initiating legislation or turning parents over to state authorities falls under the domain of force. ... I contend the only ethical choice we have in these situations is to use persuasion. We provide information, create good examples, and present our convictions persuasively. I also contend that persuasion is the most effective option for the same reason that the State may compel school attendance, but it cannot compel education, which is a different thing entirely. The mind cannot be forced. It must be convinced by reason. ...

Can we allow failure in homeschooling? Unfortunately with freedom inevitably comes the freedom to fail. Surely, with the growth of homeschooling we are going to see more homeschool 'failures.' But with a failure in homeschooling, responsibility for the outcome is clearly defined and quickly self-diagnosed and self-corrected. Homeschooling 'failures' are not forced on anyone else [as are the general failure of the public schools]. A failure is more important to the person who suffers the consequences of it than to someone else; therefore the responsibility for avoiding it is more appropriately placed in that person's hands. There are many failures in homeschooling, many self-corrections, too ... and ultimately some successes. This is our path toward learning. One has to be free in order to find success.

Christine Tykeson, "Issues and Concerns," *The Independent Family* (76 Precita Ave, Moss Beach, CA 94038), October 1994, p. 9.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 75, pp. 2-3, August 1995)

Education, Not Legislation

I think cultivation of common sense is where we should focus our attention. Parents be aware that your kids have access to information that would probably give you chills if you were to find it in their possession. There's little you can do about the availability of this info, even if you live in a bucolic community far away from the urban jungle. But take a lesson from bikers who when fighting helmet laws, always say EDUCATION NOT LEGISLATION. In other words no law in the world is gonna keep your kids from getting their hands on drugs, weapons, or dangerous information. But the knowledge you pass along to your kids, that elusive commodity known as common sense, might just keep them from doing something incredibly stupid and harmful. You don't do your kids any favors by pretending that drugs, weapons, and potentially dangerous information don't exist. If you find certain materials or information frightening then educate yourself about it and then educate your kids about why they should avoid playing with explosives for instance until they're old enough to be responsible for their own errors. Don't jump all over them for being understandably curious, and above all try to behave like YOU have some common sense yourself.

Your Freedom, October 1994, Box 54562, Oklahoma City, OK 73154.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 75, p. 3, August 1995)

Foundations of the Rights and Responsibilities of Homeschooling Parents

By Larry and Susan Kaseman

Some people have suggested that we try to protect parental rights and responsibilities by seeking federal or state legislation or amendments to the federal or state constitutions. However, this approach does not work. Parental rights and responsibilities in education are basic and fundamental and do not come from the government. If we allow the government to pass a law or a constitutional amendment which gives the government authority in education, we will be diminishing the rights we have independent of the state and increasing the control the state has over our children's education.

One of the important lessons of these initiatives is that it is virtually impossible to write a law that protects parental rights in an area that is considered fundamental, such as education and health care, without first requiring that parents assume responsibility. (To be sure, parents are responsible for their children. However, they do not want or need to have the government force this responsibility on them and then check to make sure that they are doing the right thing.)

Even more serious, if the government passes legislation that requires that parents assume responsibility for their children, then parents have to demonstrate to the government that they are being responsible by acting in ways that are consistent with the beliefs, standards, and choices of those people who have the most power in our society. Therefore, the government would decide what kind of education and health care will be required, how families would be monitored to ensure that they are complying with the law, and how they will be dealt with if a government official decides that they are not complying. Legislative initiatives supposedly designed to protect parental rights actually diminish basic freedoms that are the foundations of a democratic society.

Instead of trying to get legislation passed that would supposedly protect parental rights and responsibilities, it makes much more sense and is much safer to use the basic foundations of homeschooling rights and responsibilities to reclaim and maintain them. We are much better prepared to act to reclaim and maintain our rights if we understand just how strong the foundations are. We need to remember that the right of families to

choose for their children an education consistent with their principles and beliefs is fundamental. It is not a favor that is granted to us by school officials, legislatures, or other officials or agencies. People who understand the foundations of their rights and responsibilities act differently when dealing with officials than do people who think their rights are granted to them by laws and officials. We can act more straightforwardly, confidently, and effectively when we understand these foundations. We can also avoid giving the state and large institutions more control over our lives by asking them to protect us through legislation and constitutional amendments....

It is important that we understand that we have inalienable rights. These rights are not given to us by the state. We should not look to the state as the source of these rights, and we should not give them over to the state.

Larry and Susan Kaseman, *Home Education Magazine*, May-June 1996, p. 14 (Box 1083, Tonasket, WA 98855).

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 89, p. 2, December 1997)

Ultimately It's Your Responsibility

In an article in the Spartanburg, S.C. *Herald-Journal* (April 30, 2000, C1), homeschooling parent, Lucy Anne Adams, was quoted as saying:

My husband and I have always believed that God has given responsibility to the parents for a child's education. Whether you put them in a public school or a private school or you teach them at home, what they learn is ultimately your responsibility.

After reading this, I remarked to my wife, Julie, that this seemed to imply that most parents do not consider their children's education a part of their responsibility. Julie, and her father, who happened to be here at the time, agreed that probably 95% of American parents do not consider themselves responsible for the education of their children. They both asserted that most people consider their parental obligations fulfilled when they send their children off to school at age 5 or 6. What the children are taught becomes the responsibility of the school teachers and administrators. With that attitude, it is no surprise that we live in a totalitarian society. When you have little or no concern about the values, facts, or philosophy your children are taught, then it becomes extraordinarily easy for State propagandists to brainwash the children into believing anything they [the teachers] want.

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 109, pp. 2-3, 2nd Quarter 2001)

Remarks on the Graduation of William Watner, Homeschooler - June 4, 2005

By Carl Watner

I'd like to begin my remarks this afternoon by talking a little bit about responsibility. Our responsibility as parents is something we sometimes may not want, but it is a charge that Nature places upon us. We may try to shed accountability but ultimately we are responsible for ourselves, our families, and our children. For me, homeschooling has been my way of responding to the obligation I have to educate my children.

We often forget that parents were (and still are) directly responsible for the education of their children. This was the norm throughout most of American history. In the days before mass public schooling, a large percentage of this country's children were educated at home, or in private or religiously-affiliated schools chosen and paid for by their parents. The right to homeschool, to engage a private instructor, or to send a child to a private school all stemmed from the parents' responsibility to care for and teach their children. The idea that anyone could interfere in the fulfillment of that obligation would have incensed most parents during most of our country's history.

My own interest in homeschooling came about long before I was married. I attended 11 years of public schools in Maryland and intuitively thought there had to be a better way to learn than mass public schooling. Not only were the schools I attended run by the government and paid for by compulsory taxes, but I came to realize that I was being indoctrinated in collectivist and statist ideas. Unfortunately, I encountered the same ideas in college. After much mature reflection, I came to the conclusion that government-directed schooling was (and is) a moral and practical failure.

Homeschooling, on the other hand, has been a huge success for our family. It has taught each child that the price of accomplishment is hard work. They have seen their mother, Julie, with her nose to the grindstone: preparing lesson plans, editing papers, and doing all the other myriad tasks that have gone into their schooling and unschooling programs. Although we are here to celebrate student graduation, let us not forget that homeschooling demands the dedication of the parents, especially the mothers. Julie, would you please come up to the podium. Both William

and I want to share with you our thanks for your integral part in the homeschooling process. We want you to know how grateful we are for your part in it. Everybody, let's give Julie a round of applause.

My first exposure to the idea of homeschooling was probably through the books of John Holt. I first read his *Teach Your Own* in 1982. In looking over my copy of that book, just last month, one passage that I had highlighted almost 25 years ago jumped out at me. John Holt wrote that "We can sum up very quickly what people need to teach their own children."

First of all, they have to like them, enjoy their company, their physical presence, their energy, foolishness, and passion. They have to enjoy all their talk and questions, and enjoy equally trying to answer those questions. They have to think of their children as friends, indeed very close friends, have to feel happier when they are near and miss them when they are away. They have to trust them as people, respect their fragile dignity, treat them with courtesy, take them seriously. They have to feel in their own hearts some of their children's wonder, curiosity, and excitement about the world. And they have to have enough confidence in themselves, skepticism about the experts, and willingness to be different from most people, to take on themselves the responsibility for their children's learning. [p. 57]

I think that passage speaks eloquently about the relationship Julie and I have had with William and our other children, and it highlights our enjoyment and passion for homeschooling them. Homeschooling has allowed us to follow our consciences, and instill all of the ideals and principles we think to be of highest importance without having them torn down or attacked by someone else. To us, that is the real beauty of John Holt's idea to "teach your own."

Shortly after William was born at home I wrote an article titled "'It's Only Just a Beginning': Reflections on Being A New Father" (see *The Voluntaryist*, No. 26, June 1987). William, as I present you with your homeschool graduation diploma this afternoon, I know you realize you are moving onward in life. In that article I observed that it was my hope that you would learn to think independently and logically, and above all, to act honestly and with integrity. I believe you have accomplished that and I am proud of that accomplishment and everything else you have achieved in your first 18 years of life. In homeschooling you, your mother and I have done our best to arm you with the truth because the truth is the most powerful thing in the world. As I give you this diploma I hope you always

Remarks on the Graduation of William Watner

cling to the truth and remember that one word of truth outweighs the world. Congratulations William, and keep up the good work!

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 129, pp. 7-8, 2nd Quarter 2006)

A Letter to the Home School Legal Defense Association

May 14, 2007

Suzanne Stephens, Editor

THE HOME SCHOOL COURT REPORT

Home School Legal Defense Association

Box 3000

Purcellville, VA 20134

Re: Part One, "How Safe Is the Homeschool Horizon?" *The Home School Court Report*, March/April 2007

As a member of HSLDA, I read your magazine periodically. I would like to comment on two parts of the referenced article, and offer a third – only somewhat related – point.

I am enclosing a copy of my newsletter, *The Voluntaryist*, as background to my comments, and although I hope whomever reads this letter will find it interesting, it may be discarded without detriment to understanding this letter. (This particular issue, No. 108, contains my correspondence with Kerry Morgan, author of *Real Choice, Real Freedom In American Education*.) I describe my political orientation as voluntaryist. This label stems from the church taxation controversies of the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries in England and America, as well as from the 19th century controversy over government funding of schools in England. Voluntaryists, of whatever era, have always come down on the side of private, consensual funding of churches, schools, and government services.

Comment One:

In the section headlined "Why Do They Want Control?" on page 8, the answer offered by the author focuses on the fact that government officials believe homeschooling needs to be supervised, in order to insure that children get an adequate education. (As an aside, if government schools can't work in an exemplary fashion, why would anyone think they could or should supervise homeschools?) What answer does "following the money" furnish? Government supervision of homeschooling means more taxes, more employees, and more power for the government. As a voluntaryist, I believe the very nature of government, as a societal institution, is to expand its domain in every way possible. As Theodore Lowi wrote in his book, *Incomplete Conquest* (1981):

Every action and every agency of contemporary government must contribute to the fulfillment of its fundamental purpose, which is to maintain conquest. Conquest manifests itself in various forms of control, but in all those forms it is the common factor tying together into one system the behavior of courts and cops, sanitation workers and senators, bureaucrats and technocrats, generals and attorney generals, pressure groups, and presidents. [p. 13]

I believe that this is the proper answer to the question. Government wants control over homeschooling because it must conquer the minds and souls of its people so they will obey its laws, pay their taxes, and accept its legitimacy.

Comment Two:

In the section headlined “Conclusion,” on page 11, the statement is made that “It seems incredible that we should have to remind legislators and local school officials what the laws says.” So much for the idea that we are a government of laws and not men. People interpret the law, whether legislators, judges, police, or other bureaucrats. Laws do not interpret or enforce themselves. Given that it is the nature of government to expand its powers, is it at all surprising that HSLDA has to remind government officials what the law says? (And then fight them in court where the odds are often against HSLDA, because other government employees are empowered to decide the meaning of the law.)

Comment Three:

Somewhere I read that homeschooling is legal in all fifty states. Whatever happened to the idea that homeschooling is a common law right of parents? Wasn’t it, in fact, such a right at the start of this nation? If we depend on the government to “legalize” homeschooling, aren’t we agreeing that the government has the right to control it?

You have my permission to share this letter with whomever you please, and I hope that you would give a copy to Andrea Longbottom. While I don’t believe that it will change the outlook of anyone at HSLDA, my purpose in writing is to show you that there is at least one parent in the country who views these issues as I do.

I must speak out. One word of truth outweighs the world.

Sincerely,

Carl Watner

[Author's Addendum: The same observation that government officials have to be reminded what the laws say, also applies to the federal income tax. Although I am not impressed by the argument of some patriots that the income tax is unconstitutional, is it not highly likely that the IRS would have to be reminded of what the tax laws say? And since there is no taxpayer's rights organization to protect the interest of taxpayers, is it not likely that federal agents have expanded and misinterpreted the income tax laws in the government's favor? And even when there is a disagreement, who interprets the law: judicial officials on the government's payroll? So much for the idea that we have a government with checks and balances!]

(The Voluntaryist, No. 138, p. 4, 3rd Quarter 2008)

A Real Education

By James Ostrowski

The single greatest obstacle to creating a free society is government's control over education. Government dictates that children attend a school, and taxpayers pay enormous sums to subsidize "free" government schools. The frightening result is that the vast majority of citizens – nearly 90 percent – end up sending their children to government-subsidized schools.

The government school monopoly strengthens the state and harms the cause of liberty in many ways. On the state and local levels, education accounts for an enormous percentage of expenditures. It is absurd to suggest, as most Republican candidates do, that they will cut the size of state government but not touch the school system. Federal expenditures on education are still relatively small, but wait five minutes: the foot is in the door.

Next comes the complex web of educational special interest groups: teachers and their unions, suppliers, publishers, administrators, and even parents who get a free babysitting service. Three million government schoolteachers form a powerful army for statism. Since every subsidy is an argument for every other subsidy, the education lobby rolls logs with the best of them. They support not only the cause of ever-greater expenditures on education, but also the entire statist program of endlessly creative wealth redistribution and the ever-increasing bureaucratization and regulation of society.

Most importantly, public schools allow government to determine the political ideas that children are allowed to learn about. Libertarians are always struck by the consistently statist perspective exhibited by the vast majority of government school inmates and parolees. These students just "know" that we needed the Constitution because the nation was in chaos, FDR saved us from the Great Depression, and TR saved us from the "robber barons."

Such ideas and more and worse are inculcated in young minds when they are soft and malleable. They gradually harden like concrete long before any of our libertarian institutions can supply an antidote. Is it not the case that most lovers of liberty formed their views as teenagers or young adults? I personally do not know a single person who became a libertarian after age thirty. You have to get them while they're young or forget them. Presently, that task is impossible.

The present ban on religion in government schools aids the statist viewpoint. As all totalitarian regimes know, religions posit a scheme of values prior to and superior to the state. It is not the case, however, that no religion is taught in government schools. If religion is broadly defined to include even "one's ultimate concern," it becomes obvious that the religion taught in government schools is that interventionist government is the ultimate human value. Government schools forbid the teaching of any religion but state worship.

Government schools introduce and reinforce the bureaucratic mentality, the opposite of a free and spontaneous attitude toward life. To the bureaucratic mind, life is about unthinking adherence to a set of arbitrary rules of behavior established by superiors in a chain of command. No heavy thinking is required; just follow orders. By their very nature, such rules do not differentiate between individuals, but treat all as a mass. Twelve years of habituation to such a mode of living generally inoculates students from resistance to the bureaucratic state they will be suffering under for the remainder of their lives.

Though many government school products survive the experience with their minds intact, many hundreds of thousands emerge ill-equipped, intellectually or morally, to function independently in today's world. These misfits fill out the ranks of petty criminals, welfare recipients, drug users, and beggars of one form or another. Naturally, the existence of such folk leads to calls for more social service programs, police, prisons, and more spending on education! In this way, government creates its own demand, as the failure of one government program provides the impetus for the next one.

It is therefore no exaggeration to state that government control over education is the ultimate foundation of statism today. No substantial progress for liberty will occur unless this foundation is cracked. How do we go about this? Our only choices are to revolt, reform, or withdraw. Leaving revolt to a far corner of our minds for the time being, we are left with reform or withdrawal.

Can government schools be reformed? No. The only viable reform option on the table is vouchers. As Lew Rockwell took the lead in pointing out, vouchers do not move us in the direction of a free market in education. Rather, they constitute a form of educational socialism for the middle class. They provide an excuse for the total regulation of private schools as a condition of funding. "Whose bread I eat, his song I must sing."

Beyond the weakness of the leading proposal for reform, there is the sheer impossibility of defeating the education lobby in the political arena.

These special interests simply care more about stopping reform than the reformers do about enacting it. They have more bodies prepared to spend more money, time, and energy. They vote early and often. The laws of rational apathy and rational ignorance protect the present system as they protect all other aspects of the statist system. Reform will not be enacted, and even if it is, it will increase, not decrease, the size and power of government.

Private schools, in the short run, are not the answer. There are too few of them. Those close by tend to be too secular or too religious or the wrong religion, depending on one's point of view. Further, millions of parents, already taxed to death to support public schools, cannot presently afford expensive private schools.

Which leaves only one alternative; withdrawal. This is commonly referred to as homeschooling. The spontaneous growth of the homeschooling movement with close to two million students has begun to capture public attention. I am not prepared to say that homeschooling is the ideal form of education for everyone. I am prepared to say with certainty that it is the only political strategy that can destroy the public school monster.

Let's make the first day of government school a national day of homeschooling. Imagine the embarrassment for the educational establishment if the classrooms were empty on the first day of school. Suppose they gave a bad education and nobody came? In our government-school-induced, semi-literate culture, that picture would be worth a thousand words.

[James Ostrowski is an attorney in Buffalo, New York (jameso@apollo3.com). This article first appeared in *The Free Market*, Volume 19, No. 1, October 2001, and is reprinted by permission of Lew Rockwell, email dated February 18, 2008.]

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 140, pp. 7-8, 1st Quarter 2009)

Section II

Government Schools and History

Agitation for schools began soon after European colonists arrived in North America. For most, religious instruction was an important element, but as there was no state-controlled religious institutions in most colonies, education was largely a private affair, left to parents, extended family, church or the apprentice system. As politics took root in the more populated areas of the eastern seaboard, government involvement in schools and schooling became the norm.

The progression from voluntaryism to educational statism is outlined in a number of articles in this section. In “An Octopus Would Sooner Release Its Prey,” I examine a number of historical situations, ranging from the reluctance of Rhode Islanders to adopt compulsory schools to the attitude of English voluntaryists who opposed State education in the early 1830s. In another article, “Who Controls the Children?” I relate the tragic story of John Singer, a Mormon homeschooler who was murdered by agents of the Utah State Police in January 1979 for resisting arrest stemming from his refusal to follow the mandates of the Utah courts concerning the homeschooling of his children. I then look at a number of American court cases in which the legal authorities all conclude that “the moment a child is born he owes allegiance to the government” and that parental authority must be “at all times exercised in subordination to the paramount and overruling direction of the [S]tate.”

The other three major articles that comprise this section deal with the evolution of public libraries, the evolution of tax-supported schools in the southern part of the United States, and with the dissenting tradition in American education. Much like schools, libraries were private and voluntary institutions until the early decades of the 19th Century. But soon, the “free” tax-supported library became an adjunct to the “free” tax-supported school. Generally speaking, people opposed state-support of religion (although at one time there were a number of state churches in the American colonies and early American states). But few could see the parallel between religion and education. If the State should not support religion, why should it support the school, or the police, or the courts, or anything for that matter? In short the voluntaryist asks, Why should there be a State at all, which coercively collects taxes and outlaws private individuals and groups of individuals from competing in the provision of public services, such as schools, postal delivery systems, dispute settlement, and protection from criminals?

Libraries in the Voluntaryist Tradition

By Carl Watner

America's past is full of examples of private, voluntary cooperation which served to fill a host of needs, now unquestioningly made the responsibility of the State. For all practical purposes, from the time of the first English settlement until the early decades of the 19th Century, there was no such thing as a tax supported public library in North America. Yet, the reading needs of the public were satisfied. This article will briefly relate the developmental stages and history of the voluntary efforts to provide library services in the United States, show how voluntaryism worked in this particular realm, and demonstrate that the movement for "free" public schooling prepared the scene for the tax supported library.

The first private library in America probably belonged to Elder William Brewster of Plymouth Colony, who owned about 400 books in all. John Winthrop, Jr., the first governor of Connecticut, brought his collection of over 1000 books to Boston in 1631. Originally the term "public library" was applied to any collection of books not belonging exclusively to a private individual (it did not necessarily imply tax support). The first attempt to create a public library, as we now understand the term, came about in 1656 when Captain Robert Keayne, a merchant of Boston, willed his book collection to the town of Boston, stipulating that the city provide a building to house it. The City built a Town House with a room for the books, but the collection was destroyed by fire in 1747.

One of the earliest examples of private support for libraries came during the late 1690's, when an Anglican clergyman, who sponsored parish libraries in England, became interested in establishing religious libraries throughout the British colonies. Between 1695 and 1704, the Rev. Thomas Bray was responsible for funding and starting over seventy libraries in America. He and his Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge were responsible for sending 34,000 books to the new world.

It was not until the 1720's, that the next major development in colonial library history occurred. The first social library came into existence when Benjamin Franklin inaugurated the "Junto" library in Philadelphia in 1727. The "Junto" consisted of young men, like Franklin, who found enjoyment in debating literary and scientific subjects. Their activities prompted the formation of a library, in which they jointly pooled their privately owned

books. This arrangement came to an end in 1730. A year later, Franklin proposed what was to become the Library Company of Philadelphia. Formally chartered in 1742, the Library Company of Philadelphia was a subscription library, where the participants paid an annual fee, in return for the privilege of using the library's books.

The type of library founded by Franklin was nothing more than a voluntary association of individuals who contributed money toward a common fund to be used for the purchase of books. Every member had the right to use the books of the organization, but every library had its own by-laws indicating who owned the books and the terms on which they might be used. The subscription library was a specialized form of the social library, and between 1731 and 1759 fourteen more social libraries were organized throughout the colonies. Philadelphia had three major subscription libraries before 1770, when mergers left the city with only Franklin's Library Company.

The social library took another form near the end of the 18th Century. Mechanics' and apprentices' libraries in America were the outgrowth of the workers' institutes founded in England at the close of the 1700's. These types of libraries were often set up by tradesmen and workers who included vocational and inspirational reading materials in their collections. Other types of 19th Century libraries included the Sunday School libraries which were probably the most numerous, and the private academy or private school library. Both of these types of libraries were created in conjunction with the many religious and non-secular schools that existed in America throughout the 19th Century. This is not to overlook the many other specialized types of libraries that were started, such as university, college, hospital and Americana collections. Some of these, such as the American Antiquarian Society begun in 1812, are still in existence today.

The most popular form of 19th Century American library, however, was an old familiar institution to readers in England and the Continent, dating back to the fourteenth century. Circulating, or rental, libraries were started in the colonies several decades after the social library, but did not actually become widespread until well after the American revolution. One of the best known examples was the collection owned by James Hammond of Newport, Rhode Island, which contained some 4200 volumes in 1848. The circulating library often met with criticism because it catered to the prurient tastes of the reading public. Such libraries were one of the most sensitive barometers of popular taste because they were for-profit enterprises and the only way they could stay in business was to furnish what patrons wanted to read.

Library historians have generally identified the “fatal flaw” in the social library system by referring to its dependence on the principle of voluntary support. According to these historians, “the shifting sands” of voluntaryism seemed to be “inadequate to the task of supporting the widespread and efficient library services so desired by library advocates throughout the nation.” One problem was that social libraries tended to fail during financial hard times. The depressions of 1819, 1837 and 1857 interfered with their support and patronage. “Such instability was simply unacceptable to those who believed that libraries were essential, for whatever reason, to the success of the Republic. Their efforts to discover a form of support which would be capable of bringing stability and energy to library service led them eventually to the idea of supporting libraries with tax funds.” (Johnson and Harris, 203)

Despite these criticisms, both the historians and contemporary observers of 19th Century libraries admit that the fees of the circulating and social libraries were generally low. In the case of Massachusetts, where a survey of library resources in the State was made in 1840, and from whence much of the agitation for tax supported schooling and libraries originated, it was noted that “it is doubtful whether any serious reader was denied access to the books because of poverty. The network of social libraries across the state was more than a forerunner of the public library pattern - it was a public library system based on the ability of the patron to pay for the service he received.” (Shera, 74)

People in Massachusetts, and particularly the city of Boston, were in the vanguard of the movement calling for state and municipal support of libraries. The movement in Boston for a tax supported public library was spurred on by two major considerations. First of all, the \$400,000 gift of John Jacob Astor to the city of New York in 1848 for the establishment and maintenance of a public library had hurt the civic pride of many politically prominent Bostonians. Secondly, by the middle of the nineteenth century the centralization of the municipal administration of the city of Boston had been completed. “Boston citizens had seen their local government freely exercise authority over many functions related to community welfare. A long succession of official acts had encouraged and improved municipal services promoting public health, fire protection, education, care of the poor, water supply, and many other similar activities. The promotion of a public library for the common use was accepted without question as a proper function of the city government.” (Shera, 171)

In 1848, the Massachusetts State Legislature authorized the city of Boston to establish a public library. However, it was not until May 1852, that a board of trustees was appointed to office. The Trustees issued a report in July 1852, which showed how the existence of the city run schools in Boston set a precedent in arguing for a Boston Public library.

Although the school and even the college and the university are, as all thoughtful persons are well aware, but the first stages in education, the public makes no provision for carrying on the great work. It imparts with a notable equality of privilege, a knowledge of the elements of learning to all its children, but it affords them no aid in going beyond the elements. It awakens a taste for reading, but it furnishes to the public nothing to read....The trustees submit, that all the reasons which exist for furnishing the means of elementary education, at the public expense, apply in an equal degree to the reasonable provision to aid and encourage the acquisition of the knowledge required to complete a preparation for active life... . In this point of view we consider that a large public library is of the utmost importance as the means of completing our system of public education.

The free public library, in the words of one Bostonian, was “the crowning glory of the public schools.” The Boston Public Library, which went into operation in the spring of 1854, was not the first tax supported library in this country. Nevertheless, it was the first unendowed municipal library in any major city, and Boston, because of her importance in American municipal life (Boston was the fourth largest city in the United States at the time), accomplished much by the power of example. Legislation authorizing tax support of libraries in other New England states soon followed.

The establishment of the American Library Association in 1876, and the generous philanthropy of Andrew Carnegie (during the late 19th and early 20th Century) furnished additional impetus for the socialization of what had hitherto been primarily a voluntarist affair. Carnegie financed the construction of library buildings in cities that would guarantee to maintain a public library (by 1920 he had provided \$50 million for the erection of 2500 buildings). Also the American Library Association gave a definitive authoritarian and missionary flavor to the tax supported public library. The first president of the Association (1876-1886), Justin Winsor, noted:

that the public library could be wielded as a ‘great engine’ for ‘good or evil’ among the ‘masses of people.’ Using a similar

analogy in one of his presidential addresses to his colleagues, he said that he thought of the public library as 'a derrick, lifting the inert masses and swinging them round to the surer foundations upon which the national character shall rise.' Following Winsor's lead, librarians were soon touting the public library as a panacea for most of the country's ills: crime, disease, illiteracy, prostitution, intemperance and the reckless and un-American ways of the waves of the new immigrants sweeping into the country. (Johnson and Harris, 272)

Despite the fact that the first major city to have a tax supported library was Boston, it is interesting to observe that one of her sages as early as 1840, noted that libraries, as well as a host of other municipal services, should actually be provided by voluntary support. In his essay "Politics," Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that when men "are pure enough to abjure the code of force they will (then) be wise enough to see how these public ends of the post office, of the highway, of commerce and the exchange of property, of museums *and libraries*, of institutions of art and science can be answered." (Emphasis added.)

Up until Emerson's time, private library services were available. It is time we recaptured Emerson's voluntaryist vision.

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(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 31, pp. 5-6, April 1988)

An Octopus Would Sooner Release Its Prey: Voluntaryism vs. Educational Statism

By Carl Watner

Introduction

This article was sparked by the fact I am a parent, responsible for the education of my children, and my perception that in the days before public (state) schools, a large percentage of this country's children were educated at home, or in private or religiously-affiliated schools. A large majority of private school and homeschool parents today are motivated by their concern for religious instruction and their concern over the academic and moral decline in the public schools.

While these are certainly valid reasons for not sending one's children to a public school, my main opposition to the public schools rests on other grounds. First of all, I object to their foundation in compulsion: both in the sense that they are tax-supported, and in the coercive aspect of attendance laws. Our tax-supported, compulsory public schools are the epitome of the totalitarian State. Second, it follows that public schools will necessarily inculcate statism in their students, if for no other reason than "he who pays the piper, will call the tune." The primary job of the public school has never been to educate good people, but rather good citizens that are loyal to the State. Thirdly, to be consistent, the arguments that have been historically used to urge separation of church and State, or to argue against State involvement in education could (and should) have been directed against the very existence of the State itself. For voluntaryists, the question of whether or not the State should involve itself in education resolves itself into the question: should there be a State at all involving itself in education, religion, business, and all the other myriad affairs of humankind. In the educational field, the choice has never been between State education and no education at all. Rather, the choice has been, and will continue to be, between either a compulsory or a voluntary system of education for all people.

Homeschooling and Voluntaryism

The right to homeschool a child, to engage a private instructor, or to send him to a private school, all derive from the parents' right to care for and teach their child. Homeschooling offers the opportunity of

individualized instruction, and allows those who know and love the child the most to provide the finest instruction they can offer. For those parents who choose not to homeschool, for whatever reason, the free market in education would supply private schools specializing in providing each kind of parent-child demand.

From the time this continent was colonized by Europeans until the early part of the 20th Century, homeschooling had been the major form of education. The colonists and pioneers conceived schooling as an extension of the family, the church, and the apprentice system, rather than as a function of the State. Families were not required to obtain permission from the government to educate their children at home. (Most parents would have been incensed at the idea!) Until the late 1800s, homeschooling was simply the exercise of a common-law right. Many great people in America have been homeschooled, including Patrick Henry, Thomas Edison, Mark Twain, Andrew Carnegie, the Wright brothers, and a host of well-known political figures, including nine presidents. (That doesn't bode well for any claim that homeschooling produces voluntaryists!) Literacy rates during the era of homeschooling were at least equal to those achieved through mass public schooling (some claim higher). Even as late as 1900, only 70% of American children attended public schools.

Today, the outlook on schooling and the state has changed drastically. Since the U.S. Constitution is silent on the topic of education, most contemporary homeschoolers have claimed the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment as a religious basis for homeschooling. None (to my knowledge) have asserted their right to homeschool on the basis of the 9th and 10th Amendment claims that the powers and rights not enumerated or delegated to the government are retained and reserved by the people. Contemporary homeschoolers, by focusing on the religious exemption, have ignored the crucial issue of whether or not the State has the broader right to interfere in educational activities. Although English and American jurisprudence have historically respected the traditional family unit, with parental authority over minor children, the right to homeschool (and even use private schools) has now been eroded, and tightly regulated by every one of the fifty states. The reason for this shall become apparent as the history of compulsory schooling is described, but suffice it to say that the state has always recognized the importance of controlling the minds of "its" children.

Voluntaryism and Compulsion in Rhode Island

This brief overview of the contemporary scene allows us to better appreciate the history and development of compulsory education laws as

they first developed in the New England states. The state of Rhode Island is of particular interest since it was one of the last of the original thirteen colonies to impose educational statism on its citizens. Historians of education have tended to look upon Rhode Island unfavorably because they have measured educational progress exclusively in terms of legislation. While there were school laws in Massachusetts and Connecticut as early as the middle of the 17th Century, Rhode Island had none until nearly two hundred years later. As a result, many have concluded that Rhode Islanders were backward in educating their children, even though there were 193 schoolhouses in the state in 1828, when the legislature passed the basis of what is now the modern compulsory education laws. This view has been challenged by a state school commissioner (no less!), who wrote in 1918, in a book published by the Commission on Education, "It is, and has been, characteristic of Rhode Island school history that progress and improvement precede legislation."

Charles Carroll, author of *Public Education in Rhode Island*, from which the foregoing quote is taken, in describing the condition of pre-19th Century schooling in Rhode Island, referred to it as being "alive with educational activity," however lacking in "central direction and control." He explained the state of affairs in the following manner:

Regarding the education of the child ... as primarily a responsibility resting upon the individual, parent, or family, there were, until education became socialized and the state provided free public schools, several ways in which this obligation might be fulfilled:

First, the parent, himself or herself, might become the family teacher. ...

Second, the teacher might be a professional instructor exercising his calling as an individual entrepreneur, or perhaps combining a vocation and avocation, as did William Turpin, the innkeeper-schoolmaster of Providence. ...

Thirdly, co-operation is one of the most economical solutions of the problem of supplying a common need, and this rule applied to education as well as to other necessities. In some instances in Rhode Island co-operation functioned as a broadening of family responsibility to embrace several families. In other instances, co-operation developed in neighborhood groups, The Society of Friends was the first religious organization to provide a school for its children.

Fourthly, out of the co-operative school organization developed the incorporated school society, which was still a form of voluntary organization.

What made Rhode Islanders unique was their particular view of religion and schooling. Like the people of neighboring colonies, they held that religion was the end of human existence and human institutions. They did not believe, however, that this end could be promoted by the aid or interference of the state. "They contended that the state would do the highest service to religion by letting it alone." In the eyes of the early Rhode Islanders, schooling was a religious function, not a civil one. Thus, they rejected the idea that education was a responsibility of the state. They adhered to this belief from the mid-1600s until the late 1700s, when the agitation for state aid to education began. According to the author of an 1848 article on "Common Schools in Rhode Island," early residents of the state believed that, "To compel a citizen to support a school would have been to violate the rights of conscience. To compel him to educate his children (against his will) would have been an invasion of his rights."

"The History of Compulsory Education in New England"

In a book by this title, John Perrin, in 1896, traced the roots of compulsory education back to the Protestant Reformation. "The great movement, which began with Luther's breaking the ecclesiastical shackles which Rome had placed on the Christian world, had transferred from the church to the state all matters pertaining to the instruction of youth." Tax support of education and compulsory attendance laws have their origin in the desire that everyone be educated, which accompanied the Reformation. "The principle that the safety and the strength of a city lie in an educated and a moral citizenship, and that other principle, which is its sequence, that the state has not only the right to establish schools, but that it is its duty to do so, and, if need be, to compel the attendance of its youth upon them, are both Lutheran in their origin."

These ideas summarize the basic doctrine of Martin Luther's sermon, "On the Duty of Sending Children to School," which was delivered in 1524. He maintained that it is both the right and duty of the state to compel parents to educate their children by sending them to state schools:

If the government can compel such citizens as are fit for military service to bear spear and rifle, to mount ramparts, and perform other martial duties in time of war; how much more it has a right to compel the people to send their children to school, because in this case we are warring with the devil, whose object it

is secretly to exhaust our cities and principalities of their strong men.

There was little practical difference between the implementation of Luther's doctrine in the German states and the New England colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut. The Puritan laws of 1642 and 1647 in Massachusetts, and the school law of 1650 in Connecticut, all embraced the principle of compulsory, tax-supported schooling. Samuel Blumenfeld in *Is Public Education Necessary?* opines that it was these laws that helped make the "transition from Bible commonwealth to republicanism." Advocates of State-controlled education have always used it as a means of inculcating the entire population with their views. In this respect, there was no difference between the Lutheran reformists and the New England Puritans. Murray Rothbard sums it up by saying, "From the beginning of American history, the desire to mold, instruct, and render obedient the mass of the population was the major impetus behind the drive for public schooling. In colonial days, public schooling was used as a device to suppress religious dissent, as well as to imbue unruly servants with the virtues of obedience to the State."

By 1817, there was a movement afoot in Boston to expand the tax-supported school system. In a study authorized by the Boston School Committee and released that year, Charles Bulfinch claimed that public elementary schools were unnecessary because 96% of the town's children already attended some sort of school. Blumenfeld, citing Bulfinch, goes on to say that "most parents who sent their children to private-tuition schools did not look upon the expense as a burden: they paid the cost willingly out of love and a sense of duty. This, in turn, made them better parents. They were more likely to devote their attention to the business of education, 'where a small weekly stipend is paid by them for this object, than where the whole expense is defrayed by the public treasury.' Bulfinch further implied that moral degeneration would result if public taxes usurped the province of private responsibilities. Family solidarity might break down if government assumed the cost of what rightfully belonged to the private sphere. 'It ought never to be forgotten,' he argued, 'that the office of instruction belongs to the parents, and that to the schoolmaster is delegated a portion only of the parental character and rights'."

A full-fledged, city-wide school system in Boston was not the result of the failure of the free market. Rather, it was the result of a unique combination of seemingly-opposed interest groups, all attempting to use public education as a means of political influence and of strengthening the hand of the government, which they hoped to control. The religious

conservatives, the Unitarians, and the socialists all saw public education as the perfect vehicle to capture. Each of these groups was more interested in “modifying the sentiments and opinions of the rising generations,” according to government standards (which they would determine), than in diffusing elementary knowledge. “The socialists saw public education as the necessary instrument for the reformation of human character before a socialist society could be brought about. The Unitarians saw public education as the means of perfecting man and eradicating evil ... (and) as the means of exerting social and cultural control over a changing society. ...As for the religious conservatives, they were persuaded to see public education as the means of preserving the American system of government and maintaining the predominantly Anglo-Saxon culture against the rising tide of Catholic immigration.” With all three of these powerful groups agitating for public education, it was no wonder that the public education movement triumphed.

The English Voluntarists Oppose State Education

With respect to the history of State education, English and American history have tended to run parallel. In England, limited state aid to education was introduced in 1833; full tax support of schools came in 1881. The opposition to state aid was led by a group of people known collectively as voluntarists, because they supported the voluntary principle in education. Voluntarism – “consistent opposition to all state aid and interference” – arose out of the Non-conformist and Dissenting tradition in England, which itself derived from the attempt of the Anglican church to monopolize its position in English society. The Dissenters, for religious reasons, preferred establishing their own schools, and during the 18th Century their academies were some of the greatest English schools of their day. People such as Herbert Spencer, Edward Baines, and Edward Miall were the most well-known voluntarists. (Miall and Baines ultimately abandoned their defense of private education for political reasons later in their careers.)

The principal arguments put forth by the voluntarists were both practical and theoretical. “On the empirical side, the English voluntarists argued at length that the progress of voluntary education had been satisfactory, and that there was no need for state interference. On the theoretical side, voluntarists used their moral, social, and economic principles to build a formidable case against state education.” Herbert Spencer’s major objections to national education, published in the early

1840s in his letters on the “Proper Sphere of Government,” neatly summarize the voluntaryist position:

1.[National education] necessarily involves a uniform system of moral and intellectual training, and that the destruction of that variety of character, so essential to a national activity of mind, must naturally result.

2.That it must take away that grand stimulus to exertion and improvement on the part of the teacher, arising from honourable competition that must ever exist under the natural arrangement.

3.That, considering the improbability of any alterations in future ages, it practically assumes that we are capable of pointing out to our descendants, what kinds of knowledge are the most valuable, and what are the best modes of acquiring them – an assumption very far from the truth.

4.That it would be liable to the same perversions as a national religion, and would, in all probability, become ultimately as corrupt.

5.That, if it is intended to be an equitable institution, it must be necessarily presumed that all men will agree to adopt it – a presumption which can never be borne out.

6.That it would be used by government as a means of blinding the people – of repressing all aspirations after better things – and of keeping them in a state of subserviency.

7. From abstract reasoning, and from the evident analogy with existing institutions, it is, therefore, concluded, that national education would, in the end, be a curse, rather than a blessing.

Many of the predictions of the 19th Century voluntaryist opponents of State education have come to pass. A study of the historical record, by Jack High and Jerome Ellig in *The Theory of Market Failure*, supports the arguments of the voluntaryists. In both the United States and Britain, education was “widely demanded and supplied” privately. At least until the mid-19th Century, attendance was not compulsory in either country, and yet most children did receive some education during their childhood years. History shows that even working class parents in both countries patronized private schools, and often paid school fees that fully covered the costs of educating their children. When the government intervened in the educational marketplace, it usually displaced private education, because private schools could not compete economically with state-supported schools. Private education, which was definitely more diverse and more consumer oriented, was stifled by public education. In short, State aid to education came “at the expense of, rather than in addition to,

private efforts.”

E.G. West, author of *Education and the State*, reinforces these conclusions with his own observations:

[T]he majority of [the English] people in the first half of the 19th century did become literate [in the technical sense] largely by their own efforts. Moreover, if the government played any role at all in this sphere it was one of saboteur! As long ago as the first few years of the 19th century it was a subject for government complaint that the ordinary people had become literate. For the government feared that too many people were developing the ‘wrong’ uses of literacy by belonging to secret ‘corresponding societies’ and by reading seditious pamphlets. ... Far from subsidizing literacy, the early 19th century English governments placed severe taxes on paper in order to discourage the exercise of the public’s reading and writing abilities. Yet, despite this obstacle, by the time the government came round to subsidizing on a tiny scale in the 1830s, between 2/3 and 3/4 of the people ... were already literate.... The notion held by many people that had it not been for the [S]tate they or at least most of their neighbors would never have become educated, is a striking monument to the belief of the Victorian lawyer, Dicey, that people’s opinions and convictions eventually become conditioned by the legislated institutions they make themselves.

Why Is Education So Important to the State?

Education is of the utmost importance to the state, because “where the government can’t control the people by force, it had better control what they think.” To determine what they think, it must dominate and control the institutions in society which disseminate information and educational services. To rule by controlling what people think is far less expensive than to rule with guns. This “manufacture of consent” is largely achieved by State control of schooling. The State seizes children from their parents for at least one-third of the day, 75% of the year, teaches them what the authorities say they shall be taught, and expropriates from the parents and others the funds necessary for this to occur. The nature of what is happening is so little understood that the result is called “free public education.” As Isabel Paterson noted, this is one of the most absolute contradiction of facts by terminology of which our language is capable. As she adds:

Every politically controlled educational system will inculcate the doctrine of state supremacy ... Once that doctrine has been

accepted, it becomes an almost superhuman task to break the stranglehold of the political power over the life of the citizen. It has had his body, his property, and mind in its clutches from infancy. An octopus would sooner release its prey. A tax-supported compulsory educational system is the complete model of the totalitarian state.

We, both as parents and children, are so conditioned by the State around us that few of us see through the “divine right of the State.” This successful indoctrination via public education can only be described as one of the propaganda miracles of the world. It is easy to agree with Samuel Blumenfeld’s assessment that “experience has taught us that the most potent and significant expression of statism is a State educational system. Without it, statism is (nearly) impossible. With it, the State can, and has, become everything.” This helps explain why education is one of the most important of political questions. Statist schooling, everywhere, promotes nationalism through the teaching of history, civics, and social studies. This point also helps explain why soon after establishing compulsory attendance laws and public schools, the state establishes “teachers’ colleges:” Control the teachers and it becomes easier to control what their students are taught.

The State makes a feeble attempt to justify its role by arguing that it must provide children with the necessary reading and writing skills to enable them to participate in its democratic system of government. It also argues that it must supply schooling so that children will be able to eventually provide for themselves and not become a burden on the welfare system. These alleged “civic” and “economic” reasons really mask the state’s true purpose in socializing and politicizing children. State education is a form of social control which enables the State to cast children into a behavioral mold acceptable to the politicians, and which practically assures the continued existence of the State.

This is not to say that values and ideologies would be absent from the free market schooling. The difference would be that no single institution, like the state, would be able to dominate the educational scene. For education, etymologically, (from ‘educare’) means “to lead out,” and someone must decide where the child is to be “led.” At times in the past, it was the parents, the family unit, or the religious body with which they associated, that directed education, but these social forces have been greatly weakened by the State.

Conclusion: Freedom In Education Is Not a Special Case

The arguments for educational freedom and freedom from State

interference have usually suffered from a lack of consistency. Few people are prepared to argue that since the State sets educational standards and provides education, it therefore should set minimum parental standards in areas such as the feeding and clothing of children. Yet, the same reasons used to defend educational statism could be used to defend state involvement in these other areas. Few people have understood that freedom in education is not a special case, but rather embraces the general argument against the State. Instead, most people lose sight of the forest for the trees, by arguing about the State's role in many areas undreamt of by earlier advocates of "limited" government, such as whether sex education and Biblical creationism should be taught in public school, health inoculations, teacher certification, building code requirements for schools, lunch programs, busing and transportation programs, non-discrimination policies, taxation programs to support this interference, etc. The simplest argument is that if there were no State, these issues would resolve themselves in a free market for schools. Furthermore, a sort of Gresham's law would operate in a free market school environment: in the absence of state-subsidized schools, those schools best serving the consumer would achieve success, and those not pleasing enough customers would soon fail.

To advocate liberty is not to advocate untaught children or bad schools, but rather excellence in education. The voluntary principle does not guarantee results, but only that we have the possibility of choosing the best available. "Liberty is the chief cause of excellence; ... it would cease to be Liberty if you proscribed everything inferior. Cultivate giants if you please, but do not stifle dwarfs."

Isabel Paterson once asked, "Who taught Americans to drive?" "It was not done in school and could not have been." The answer to her question is that Henry Ford and his co-workers in the automobile industry showed Americans how to drive by making the automobile widely available to the common man. Such teaching was done by the free enterprise system on a voluntary basis: a willing customer buying a wanted product from a willing seller, and then learning to use it. There was no element of compulsion about 'teaching' people to drive. Those who wanted to and could afford the 'lessons' learned; those who wanted to and could not afford the lessons, waited till they had the opportunity; those who didn't want to learn, were not forced to.

This example conveys the voluntaryist message quite clearly and concisely. There is no more reason for State involvement in education than there is for the State in any other area of life. The advocates of public education should rely on persuasion, not coercion, to bring about their

desired goals. Instead, we have a system of education which has become the most despicable and insidious system of teaching propaganda and indoctrinating the future generation that has ever existed in this country. It rests on compulsion, destroys parental responsibility for the education of one's young, and is generally ineffective in creating thinking youngsters. But then, that is its unstated purpose and agenda. Thinking slaves are dangerous because they eventually begin to question, and then disobey, authority.

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(*The Voluntarist*, No. 48, pp. 1, 4-7, February 1991)

State Education: A Help or Hindrance?

By Auberon Herbert

It is a mistake to suppose that government effort and individual effort can live side by side. The habits of mind which belong to each are so different that one must destroy the other. In the course of time there falls alike over everybody concerned the shadow of coming changes. Work which would have been done resolutely and manfully, if no idea of government interference had existed, remains undone, because the constant tendency of government to enlarge its operations is felt everywhere. The history of our race shows us that men will not do things for themselves or for others if they once believe that such things can come without exertion on their own part. There is not sufficient motive. As long as the hope endures that the shoulders of some second person are available, who will offer his own shoulders for the burden? It must also be remembered that unless men are left to their own resources they do not know what is or what is not possible for them. If government half a century ago had provided us all with dinners and breakfasts, it would be the practice of our orators today to assume the impossibility of our providing for ourselves.

Excerpted from the *Fortnightly Review*, July 1880.

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 48, p. 1, February 1991)

Who Controls the Children?

By Carl Watner

In his book, *The Survival Home Manual*, Joel M. Skousen notes that “the bureaucrat never does any of the dirty work for the prosecution of his rulings.” In other words, a judge or administrative officer who cites a citizen for the conduct of illegal activities never directly enforces his own edicts. If the activity in question – such as building a house without a permit – continues after it has been administratively determined such activity should stop, then the bureaucrat in charge of regulating such affairs usually initiates a case before the judicial branch of government. If the defendant refuses to “cease and desist,” then the judge has the power to hold the offender in contempt. Instead of arresting a person for “building a house without a permit” the judge authorizes a policeman or sheriff to arrest the offender for “contempt of court.” The crime then shifts into a different playing field. The issue then becomes one of “control,” and the offense becomes one of questioning and denying the power and authority of the State and its judicial system. As Skousen puts it, “Notice, that if you ever resist bureaucratic ‘law,’ you are not prosecuted for resisting an inane and unconstitutional law, but for ‘defying the court’ or ‘resisting arrest.’ Separating the act of resistance from the initial law which motivated the act is one of the slickest ways to bring a populace into line with bureaucratic law.”

A compliant citizenry makes it easy for the State to mask its ultimate sanction. Usually the threat of arrest and imprisonment is enough to make most people docile and obedient. However, if a person wishes to resist, and refuses to submit to “court orders,” he will usually find himself overwhelmed by State force usually in the form of drawn guns ready to shoot. All State law, no matter how petty, has as its final punishment your death – should you decide to resist to the bitter end. In this enlightened age, there are few holdouts who would dare the State to go this far, but in the late 1970s John Singer, a fundamentalist Mormon living in Utah, defied court orders that he cease teaching his children at home. Ultimately, he would not peacefully submit to an arrest, and after holing himself and his family up in their mountain hideaway, he was eventually shot and killed by law enforcement officers on January 18, 1979.

The saga of John Singer should be of interest to voluntaryists for a number of reasons. First, it is concrete proof that State sovereignty rests on

force and its threat. Second, it presents the dilemma of conscientious homeschool parents: Who has the final say how children should be raised and educated? Who has the right to say what they are taught, and how they are taught? Should homeschool parents acknowledge State supremacy in matters of schooling and submit to the State by complying with its regulations, or should they go their own way, as John and Vickie Singer did? In short, the case of John Singer epitomizes the question: Who ultimately controls the children in our society – their parents or the State? The purpose of this article is to look at some of the important evidence necessary to answer these questions.

Although John Singer was born in Brooklyn, New York in 1931, his parents, both originally German citizens, took him back to their native country shortly after his birth. There he experienced the horrors of Nazi regimentation and the chaos of World War II and its aftermath. Since he was a U.S. citizen he was allowed to emigrate back to the United States in 1946. There he lived with his mother's sister, learned English, studied TV repair, and became a carpenter under his uncle's tutelage. Within a year after his mother, brother, and two sisters joined him in New York, they had saved enough money to drive to Utah, "the promised land of their faith," the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Mormons.

By the time Singer married Vickie Lemon in September 1963, he had built himself a log home in the Kamas Valley, where he farmed and plied his TV repair trade. He was described by David Fleisher and David Freedman, authors of his biography (*Death of an American*, New York: Continuum, 1983) as "a strong, independent, industrious man with an unwavering faith in his God." Seven years after their marriage John and Vickie were excommunicated from the Mormon Church for their continued insistence on believing in the literal interpretation of the Mormon scriptures (including its original doctrine of plural marriage) and for taking the side of the fundamentalists rather than the modern church. Two years later, in March 1973, they withdrew their three school-age children from South Summit Elementary School, a public school in Kamas, Utah. The Singers objected to the "immoral secular influences" found in the Utah state-run schools, including "the school's 'permissive attitude' toward such immoral behavior as sexual promiscuity, drugs, crude language and gestures, rock music, and lack of respect for adults." They believed the State had no constitutional right to interfere with their religious beliefs by requiring them to send their children to public school.

This marked the beginning of the first phase of Singer's resistance to public schooling. After an initial meeting in April 1973, to explain their

views to the Superintendent of the school district and the members of the Board of Education, the Singers received a letter informing them that they were in violation of the state's compulsory attendance law, which required attendance at a public or "regularly established" private school, or homeschooling subject to the approval of their local school district's Board of Education. On December 6, 1973 the School Board filed a complaint against John Singer in juvenile court for "the crime of contributing to the delinquency and neglect of" his three oldest children, ages 6, 7 and 8. When Singer failed to appear in court to defend himself against the charges, the judge issued a bench warrant for his arrest. It took the sheriff and his deputies about a month to apprehend Singer, since he refused to surrender voluntarily. They surprised him while he was on a TV repair call. Singer spent the night in jail, and the following day agreed to accept a court-appointed attorney and work with the school board on an approved homeschooling program. On March 8, 1974, the school board issued a certificate of exemption to the Singers, with the stipulation that the school board administer a Basic Skills Achievement Test to the four oldest Singer children twice a year, starting in the fall. The school psychologist, Tony Powell, was appointed to administer the tests and monitor the children's home education progress. Three months later, in June 1974, the criminal complaint against Singer was dismissed based on the evidence of his compliance.

John and Vickie Singer did not take lightly to regimentation. Although they allowed their children to be tested in October 1974, and April 1975, by April 1976 they concluded that "they must get out from under the thumb of the local school district" because they resented bureaucratic intrusions into their home and family life. Consequently, they informed the district they would permit no further testing. They decided that they would educate their children according to their own religious beliefs without interference from the government. As they explained, "We are responsible for our children, not the school board. They don't support or raise them, we do. We are true Americans, and the Lord has let us know that He will protect our constitutional freedoms. It is a corrupt government that passes a law that takes children away from their parents, and those people who try to enforce that law are tyrants." (pp. 61-61)

Thus began the second stage of their resistance. The local school board withdrew their exemption certificate, and initiated a new criminal complaint against them. After having attended several school board meetings and court hearings, on August 23, 1977, the Singers were present in the juvenile court of Judge Kent Bachman. The charge against them was

again criminal neglect of their children. Representing himself, John refused to plead guilty. All his children were well cared for, none were “neglected,” and he readily admitted that they did not attend public school. Singer’s position was “that the only thing I have to prove to this court is that my children are not being trained for any delinquency actions or any criminal actions, and this is the only thing I have to prove and nothing else.” (p. 76) Judge Bachman insisted that the only issue was whether the Singers “complied with the policies or standards set out for the education of your children” by the school board. (p. 81) Singer responded, “But it seems like the standards which have been set out here are not the same standards I believe in....Have you got even the right to force my children under any form of education?”

The judge concluded that the Singers were guilty of a misdemeanor and found them in violation of the compulsory attendance law. Both parents and children were to be evaluated by a court designated psychologist, Dr. Victor Cline. John and Vickie were each fined \$290, and sentenced to 60 days in the county jail unless they met with the evaluating psychologist. Due to the publicity that their case was generating, the Singers were approached by supporters of private and home schooling, and urged to incorporate their own private school. Since Utah law was very vague on the requirements for a private school, it was thought they might use this loophole to escape the jurisdiction of Judge Bachman’s juvenile court. Thus by the time they were summoned on November 1, to explain why they had failed to comply with the judge’s order (four children had been tested and evaluated by Dr. Cline, but they themselves refused to submit) the Singers had formally incorporated their own private school, High Uintas Academy, Inc. Judge Bachman granted a stay, and held that if after one month the Singers did not comply with the order of August 23rd, “there will be incarceration for both of you.

On November 3, 1977 John and Vickie were interviewed and tested by Dr. Cline. He found the children to be on an average of 34 points lower IQ than their parents because the children were not having “adequate educational experiences.” In the meantime, Judge Bachman had set a trial date for December 16th, and decided to hold a pre-trial conference on November 5. In an effort to work out a peaceful compromise, the judge agreed to vacate his order that they be jailed and pay a fine, if the Singers would submit an acceptable plan for the education of their children. This the Singers refused to do, because they believed the judge had improperly disregarded their efforts to form a private school. They also decided not to attend their December 16th trial for fear that their children would be

physically taken from them. On December 16th, Judge Bachman issued bench warrants for their arrest, and set bail at \$300 each. Their trial was continued to January 31, 1978.

For the next year, John Singer was literally at war with the authorities, and did not set foot outside his farm. When contacted by the sheriff on the telephone, John informed him that he “intended to resist arrest.” At the January 3rd trial, Judge Bachman found John and Vickie Singer guilty of child neglect. By now, they had five school-age children who were ordered to submit to daily tutoring provided by the South Summit School District. If the Singers failed to comply with the tutoring program designed by the school district, they would be held in contempt of court. The Singer children were to remain in the custody of the Utah Division of Family Services (Judge Bachman had first issued the custody ruling on August 23, 1977), but allowed the children to remain at home with John and Vickie. After the trial, John Singer told the press that he and Vickie would not allow a tutor in their home. “We’re not trying to tell other people what to believe or how to live, we just want to be left alone and mind our own business.”

As a result of case reassignments, a new judge entered the picture. Since the Singers would not comply with the school district’s daily tutoring plan, on February 6, 1978, the new juvenile court judge, Farr Larson, issued an order for the Singers and their children to appear in court March 14, 1978 to show cause as to why the parents should not be held in contempt, and why the children should not be taken from their home and placed in custody of the State. The Singers did not attend their show cause hearing on March 14, 1978. Judge Larson found them in contempt and issued bench warrants for their arrest. His order was stayed for 7 days, so as to allow the Singers time to file an appeal. On March 21st, the sheriff was ordered to commit both parents to jail for 30 days, and each of them were ordered to pay a fine of \$200.

The Singers refused to appeal their convictions (primarily on the basis that such actions were inconsistent with their religious beliefs). John had also previously told friends that “I’d rather die than go against my religious beliefs.” (p. 111) When Judge Larson finally dissolved his stay of execution, he was quoted in the newspapers as saying:

By law, children in this state have a right to an education, and a duty to attend school. Children are no longer regarded as chattels of their parents. They are persons with legal rights and obligations. The rights of the parents do not transcend the right of a child to an education nor the child’s duty to attend school.

Parents who fear the negative influence of public education should also examine the damaging effects of teaching a child disobedience to law and defiance to authority. (p. 114)

The judge also directed the sheriff to arrest John Singer, but “to employ such means and take such time as are reasonably calculated to avoid the infliction of bodily harm on any person.” (p. 144) After nearly six months of inaction, in October 1978, Judge Larson removed the restriction about the use of violence from his arrest order, but he set no time limit for Singer’s apprehension. After consultation with State law enforcement officials, it was decided that they would try to arrest Singer during a media interview, at which three law officers would pose as newsmen. This caper was foiled by Singer’s strength, his family’s immediate reaction (they jumped all over his would-be captors), and the pistol in Singer’s waist band. On October 20, 1978, the Summit County attorney filed a new criminal complaint, charging John with 3 counts of aggravated assault for resisting arrest with a gun. A felony warrant (which automatically permits the use of deadly force to effect an arrest) was issued so he could be taken into custody. Judge Larson was also reaching the end of his patience. Near the end of October 1978, he threatened the county sheriff with a contempt of court citation if he – the sheriff – did not carry out the order to arrest Singer.

By early November 1978, John Singer had been at a standoff with the authorities for the better part of a year. He was still in contact with the media via the telephone and friends. His predicament, he believed, was caused as much by the Mormon Church as it was by the State of Utah. “Speaking of his right to educate his children as he saw fit, John had said: ‘According to the state’s system, my home is just a feeding place. All they want me to do is feed my children and they want to take them from me and brainwash them to put them into a Sodom and Gomorrah society’.” (p. 158) The local and State government and its enforcement machinery found themselves in an increasingly embarrassing situation. One lone man was holding them at bay.

Something had to be done. The leadership of the Utah Department of Public Safety, the Division of Narcotics and Liquor Law Enforcement, and Highway Patrol all became involved in a surveillance and apprehension plan. The key was to “surprise Singer with such a show of force that he would realize the futility of resisting arrest and would submit peacefully.” (p. 170) Ten men, in five groups of two, were to watch Singer, learn his daily routines, and eventually confront him in such a fashion that he would have no choice but to submit. On January 18, 1979, their plan was put into

effect while John was clearing snow off his driveway with a gas-powered snow blower. Although he had put down his rifle, Singer still had a thirty-eight Colt automatic tucked in his trousers. When approached by four of the lawmen, he turned, started running, and drew the pistol from its resting place. Feeling threatened for his personal safety, one of the officers fired his shotgun at Singer, and killed him with a single blast of buckshot. Shortly thereafter, social workers took the children into protective custody for nine days. In order to get them back, Vickie agreed to a court-approved plan whereby she could teach the children at home under the supervision of a private school acceptable to the juvenile court.

Thus ended the life and saga of John Singer, killed while resisting arrest on charges of contempt of court and feloniously assaulting law officers attempting to arrest him. Was he right? Does state law assign the control of children to their parents, or does the State reserve to itself the right to control their upbringing? In other words, who controls the children in our society?

One of the books that prompted the writing of this article was Blair Adams' volume: *Who Owns The Children?* (subtitled *Public Compulsion, Private Responsibility, and the Dilemma of Ultimate Authority*, Waco, Texas: Truth Forum, 1991, Fifth edition). Penning a very broad-ranging fundamentalist Christian attack on State compulsion, the author examines some of the court cases and legal precedents that shed light on this important question. In his "Preface" he writes:

[A]ccording to the courts of this land, ... "A child is *primarily*" not his parents' offspring but "a ward of the [S]tate"; ... parents hold relationship to the child only at the State's "sufferance"; ... "the moment a child is born he owes allegiance to the government"; ... parents serve as a mere "guardianship" which "the government places [the child] under"; ... parental authority must be "at all times exercised in subordination to the paramount and overruling direction of the [S]tate"; ... "the natural rights of a parent to the custody and control of ... his child are subordinate to the power of the [S]tate"; ... in deciding whether parent or State will control a child's education, the child's academic progress under the parents – even as measured by State-approved tests – has been termed by State prosecutors as "irrelevant and immaterial"; and finally ... such legal principles and policies form the basis of all this nation's compulsory education laws. (pp. xix-xx)

Now let us examine the actual court cases and contexts in which these judicial statements were made.

Mercein v. People Ex Rd Barry, 25 Wendell 64, December 1840

This case involved a custody dispute in New York state. Lawyers for Mr. Barry, the father, argued that the father's right to the custody of his minor child was paramount to that of Mercein (his father-in-law) or even Mercein's daughter (the child's mother). The court stressed that, "The interest of the infant is deemed paramount to the claim of both parents," and that the welfare of the infant must be recognized ahead of the rights of the parents. The chancellor then went on to explain how parental authority is dependent on the State:

By the law of nature, the father has no paramount right to the custody of his child. By that law the wife and child are equal to the husband and father; but inferior and subject to their sovereign. The head of a family, in his character as husband and father, has no authority over his wife and children; but in his character of sovereign he has. On the establishment of civil societies, the power of the chief of a family as sovereign, passes to the chief or government of the nation. And the chief or magistrate of the nation not possessing the requisite knowledge necessary to a judicious discharge of the duties of guardianship and education of children, such portion of the sovereign power as he relates to the discharge of these duties, is transferred to the parents, subject to such restrictions and limitations as the sovereign power of the nation think proper to prescribe. *There is no parental authority independent of the supreme power of the state.* But the former is derived altogether from the latter. ... [Emphasis added.]

It seems then, that by the law of nature, the father has no paramount inalienable right to the custody of his child. ... *The moment the child is born, It owes allegiance to the government of the country of its birth,* and is entitled to the protection of that government. [Emphasis added.]

State v. Bailey, 157 Ind. 324, October 29, 1901

Sheridan Bailey had been convicted for violating the compulsory education law of Indiana which went into effect March 8, 1897. One of the grounds upon which Bailey challenged the state was that "it invaded the natural right of a man to govern and control his own children." The court responded with the following words:

The natural rights of a parent to the custody and control of his infant child are subordinate to the power of the state, and may be restricted and regulated by municipal laws. [Emphasis added.] One of the most important natural duties of the parent is his obligation to educate his child, and this duty he owes not to the child only, but to the commonwealth. If he neglects to perform it or willfully refuses to do so, he may be coerced by law to execute such civil obligation. [Emphasis added.]

Viemeister v. White, President of Board of Education, 179 N.Y. 235,
October 18, 1904

This case involved a compulsory immunization regulation of the Queens County Board of Education mandating that all pupils and teachers be vaccinated, or otherwise be denied admittance to school. The parents sued the Board of Education, demanding that their son be re-admitted to public school, even though he had not received the required shots. The parents believed that smallpox vaccinations “did not tend to prevent smallpox,” “tends to bring about other diseases, and that it does much harm with good.” The court observed: “When the sole object and general tendency of legislation is to promote the public health, there is no invasion of the Constitution, even if the enforcement of the law interferes to some extent with liberty or property.” The court also noted that belief in the efficacy of vaccination programs was widespread both in the United States and other countries:

The possibility that the belief may be wrong, and that science may yet show it to be wrong, is not conclusive; for the Legislature has the right to pass laws which, according to the common belief of the people, are adapted to prevent the spread of contagious diseases. In a free country, where the government is by the people through their chosen representatives, practical legislation admits of no other standard of action: *for what the people believe is for the common welfare must be accepted as tending to promote the common welfare, whether it does in fact or not.* [Emphasis added.]

In effect, the court said that if it is a common belief that killing red headed people is an effective way to ward off economic depressions, and the legislature passes a law authorizing the killing of all red heads for this purpose, then killing of red headed people is no longer murder but a legislatively sanctioned activity for the general welfare of the society. Such reasoning is the result of belief in majority rule, and the negation of individual rights.

State v. Shorey, 48 Or. 396, September 11, 1906

John Shorey was convicted of violating Oregon's child labor law which prohibited "the employment of a child under 16 years of age for a longer period than 10 hours in any one day". On appeal the Oregon Supreme Court explained that laws regulating the employment of adults had a different constitutional basis than the child labor law. Since the 14th Amendment to the federal constitution protected "life or liberty," adult employment laws were only valid if they were reasonably necessary to "protect the public health, safety, morals or general welfare."

But laws regulating the right of minors to contract do not come within this principle. ... *They [minors] are wards of the state and subject to its control. As to them the state stands in the position of parens patriae and may exercise unlimited supervision and control over their contracts, occupation, and conduct, and the liberty and right of those who assume to deal with them. This is a power which inheres in the government for its own preservation and for the protection of life, person, health, and moral of its future citizens.* [Emphasis added.] ... [The court then goes on to cite the author of a legal textbook:] 'Minors are wards of the nation, and even the control of them by parents is subject to the unlimited supervisory control of the state.' Consequently, the court affirmed that Oregon's child labor law was "a valid exercise of legislative power."

Allison et al. v. Bryan, 21 Oklahoma 557, June 25, 1908.

This case adjudicated a custody dispute over Kenner Allison, Jr., the illegitimate child of Anna Bryan and Kenner Allison, Sr. By the early common law, fathers usually asserted their control over any and all of their children. This right was gradually eroded by statutory law and court decisions during the 19th Century. Thus, by 1908, the Oklahoma Supreme Court declared that fathers were not entitled to the services of their children:

A child is primarily a ward of the state. The sovereign has the inherent power to legislate for its welfare, and to place it with either parent at will, or take it from both parents and to place it elsewhere. This is true not only of illegitimate children, but is also true of legitimate children. *The rights of the parent in his child are just such rights as the law gives him; no more, no less.* His duties toward his child are just such as the law places upon him. ... [The

Court then cites the case of *Mercein v. People* (see above) and concludes its general discussion of children, parents, and the state by referring to Lewis Hochheimer's book, *A Treatise on the Law Relating to the Custody of Infants* (1887).] 'It may be considered as the settled doctrine in American courts that all power and authority over infants are a mere delegated function, entrusted by the sovereign state to the individual parent or guardian, revocable by the state through its tribunals, and to be at all times exercised in subordination to the paramount and overruling direction of the state.'" [Emphasis added.]

Ex parte Powell, 6 Oklahoma Criminal Ct of Appeals 495, January 11, 1912.

Upon being convicted of burglary, John Powell, aged 14 and without parents or relatives, received a sentence of two years in the State Training School for Boys. This case was instituted by the State Commissioner of Charities and Corrections, who applied for a writ of habeas corpus, seeking to remove Powell from the school. It became necessary for the Court to review the statutory provisions relating to juvenile delinquents in Oklahoma. It observed that in the United States "the fundamental doctrine upon which governmental intervention in all such [juvenile] cases is based is that the moment a child is born he owes allegiance to the government of the country of his birth, and is entitled to the protection of the government for his person, as well as his property.... The authority of all guardians is derived from the state;"

Prince v. Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 321 US 158, January 31, 1944.

This case originated in a clash between the Jehovah's Witnesses and the State of Massachusetts. The legislature had passed a law which prohibited children from selling magazines. It was designed to prevent Jehovah's Witnesses from having their children distribute the "Watchtower" publication. Sarah Prince had been convicted of violating Massachusetts' child labor laws, and she appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States on the basis that her religious freedoms, under the First Amendment, had been violated by the State. The Supreme Court upholding her conviction, set forth part of its reasoning in the following comments:

Previously in *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, 268 US 510, 45 S. Ct. 571, ... [see reference to this case in my article "Bad or Worse!," *The Voluntaryist*, October 1992] this Court had sustained the parent's authority to provide religious with secular schooling, and the child's right to receive it, as against the state's

requirement of attendance at public schools. ... It is cardinal with us that the custody, care and nurture of the child reside first in the parents, whose primary function and freedom include preparation for obligations the state can neither supply nor hinder. *Pierce v. Society of Sisters*, supra. And it is in recognition of this that these decisions have respected the private realm of family life which the state cannot enter.

But the family itself is not beyond regulation in the public interest, as against a claim of religious liberty. And neither rights guard the general interest in youth's well being, the state as parens patriae may restrict the parent's control by requiring school attendance, regulating or prohibiting the child's labor, and in many other ways. ... [T]he state has a wide range of power for limiting parental freedom and authority in things affecting the child's welfare, and this includes, to some extent, matters of conscience and religious conviction. [Emphasis added.]...

The state's authority over children's activities is broader than over like actions of adults. This is peculiarly true of public activities and in matters of employment. A democratic society rests, for its continuance, upon the healthy, well-rounded growth of young people into full maturity as citizens, with all that implies. [What should they be – obedient, tax-paying slaves and conscripts?] It [the state] may secure this against impending restraints and dangers, within a broad range of selection.

Ex parte Walters, 221 P.2d 659, Oklahoma Crim Ct of Appeals, June 28, 1950.

This case extensively quotes *Ex parte Powell*, one of the earlier Oklahoma citations found above. It prefaces these quotes by remarking that, "Thus it will be found that this court has for some forty years been committed to the thesis that the state has a paramount interest in the child. And why should this not be? Is it not for the common good? Aristotle, the Greek Philosopher, hundreds of years prior to the modern dictators who for selfish, sinister ends, though, proclaimed for the common good, have made such effective use of the idea, said, 'All who have meditated on the act of governing mankind have been convinced that the fate of empires depends on the education of youth'."

Without a doubt statist case law demonstrates that the State claims that it owns the children. Although there may be cases to the contrary (we'd

like to see them if there are any), John Singer was certainly right when he asserted that the state wants the parents to bear the cost of raising the children, so that the state can then take the children, brainwash them, and have them as loyal supporters.

The implications arising from the principle that the State owns the children are astounding. Note, that if the State owns the children, then it must own the adults into which the children mature. Although there may be no court rhetoric to this effect, all the actions of the State, from taxation to military conscription of adults reinforces this conclusion. Second, if the State owns the children, then adults should be required to have not only marriage licenses, but permission from the State before they bear children. Why should unapproved couples be allowed to procreate? Soon, the State will not only grant permission to have children, but will tell couples how many children to have. Bearing children and having a family become privileges granted only at the sufferance of the State. Third, comes licensure of all birth attendants and the places where births may take place. If your home is not approved by the State, you may not have a home birth, any more than you may home school your children if the State does not approve. If the state owns the children, it must be able to keep track of when, where, and how they are born. (Current birth registration laws are but a partial attempt to do this.) As Blair Adams puts it:

This desire for control over childbirth has *nothing* to do with considerations for the health and safety of the mother or child. As always it has everything to do with the power of the State and its desire to establish total control over, its ownership of, the lives of our children and of everyone else as well. ... The day rapidly approaches that will designate as a crime the birth of children anywhere outside State-controlled and State-sanctioned institutions, just as today many states have designated as criminal the education of children outside of such institutions.

It has been repeatedly shown, although State rhetoric denies it, that State solicitude for children originates not from any genuine concern for the children, but rather from the State's desire to achieve "order, stability and control." The State's primary concern is always not the condition of children's lives, but in expanding State control. "Control, not quality, has become the essential rationale behind" all sorts of State compulsion. In the case of education, the State maintains a double standard. Its own efforts to educate via the public schools is an admitted failure. Parents of homeschoolers have excelled at training their children. Rather than trying to curtail homeschooling, one would think that the State would logically

try to encourage it. More students at home would take some of the burden off the State system, and would result in an improvement for those taken out of public schools. So why does the State want to regulate and curb homeschooling? Obviously there are vested economic interests which oppose homeschooling (teachers, unions, etc.). But state opposition to unfettered homeschooling is more than a question of economics. It is a question of control and legitimacy. As Blair Adams explains:

[T]o proclaim a people free to choose their own government but then to insist that the government determine, through a government-controlled compulsory educational system, the very attitudes and values by which the people will choose becomes the most insidious and pernicious form of tyranny: it gives the people the *illusion* of freedom while all along controlling them through a form of governmental programming.

There is little doubt that the State will do everything in its power to maintain its supremacy. We have seen how State personnel murdered John Singer for no other reason than he would not “bow down to Caesar.” A year and a half after his death, the judge who issued the contempt citation against Singer, finally terminated his jurisdiction over the Singer family. “The freedom that we’ve been fighting for has finally come through,” declared Vickie Singer. “But it’s very ironic, to say the least, because now I’m teaching my kids the same way that John and I did before he died, and I think the State knows it. But all they wanted to do was show us, and show the people, that if anybody tried to come against the system, watch out because this is what can happen to you. And I think they tried to use John and me as an example.” (p. 216)

So there you have it. As long as the omnipotent cult of the State exists the State will attempt to control the children. Homeschooling, as the State has already recognized, contains an explosive and potential force for change, possibly away from statism in the direction of voluntaryism. If there is to be a change, it must originate within the individual, and must proceed from individual to individual. Homeschooling certainly follows this method. There can be no mass conversions. Only as the philosophy of voluntaryism is passed down from father to son, from mother to daughter, will the situation change. “If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.”

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 59, pp. 1, 3-7, December 1992)

Drawing The Line

By Blair Adams

It certainly appears, on the surface and in the short run, easier to come to some sort of compromise with the State and allow it to have some say in the education of our children. Yet such a compromise can only feebly palliate our position for that day when the State comes and insists that we must teach what we conscientiously oppose. Minimum Requirements do indeed *appear* reasonable. And probably few Christian parents or schools fail to teach their children the basic subjects that the proponents of this view include in their list of prescribed courses. ... This is quite different, however, from acknowledging that the State has the right to *compel* us to teach our children these things, particularly when the State has so miserably failed in teaching “its” own children these very requirements.

Moreover, once we grant this principle, where can we possibly draw the line? If we agree that the State has the legitimate authority to mandate the teaching of that which society generally agrees as essential to social communication and good citizenship because we may agree with those basic requirements today, what if tomorrow the consensus of an increasingly corrupt society (as in Nazi Germany) goes beyond our prior agreement? If tomorrow we say that we cannot agree to the State’s requirements, then we can only in good conscience refuse to submit to those requirements if we deny that the State ever had that rightful authority in the first place. If the State has *legitimate* power to control education, then obviously that control cannot be defined by those over whom it is to be exercised. Either the State has the legitimate power or it does not. If we accept any governmental authority in this area today, we greatly weaken and compromise our position for the battles that will inevitably come tomorrow. Unless we confess now that absolute, given limits prevent us from submitting in good conscience to any governmental control of education, we shall have compromised our position for the future.

Blair Adams, *Who Owns The Children?* (1991) p. 292.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 59, p. 3, December 1992)

Only Freedom Breeds Excellence

One voluntaryist's reaction to a reading of *The Dissenting Tradition In American Education*, by James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt (New York: Peter Lang, 2007. See www.peterlang.com)

By Carl Watner

It is often said that the victorious side in a war gets to write its history. This observation is no less relevant to philosophical disputes than military confrontations. In the case of schools and schooling, the dominant, winning side in the struggle over control of the education of the young in the United States has been American governments, at all levels. This is evidenced by compulsory school attendance laws and government-run schools supported by local, state, and federal taxation.

In their book, *The Dissenting Tradition In American Education*, James Carper and Thomas Hunt point out that education was either church or familial throughout most of the early American colonies and states. “[T]he colonial approach to education continued virtually unchanged throughout the late 1700s and early 1800s.” Much of colonial and pioneer America was so far from the seat and power of governments that there were few compulsory attendance laws or taxes for the purpose of supporting what few government schools there were. It was then accepted as a common law right that parents were responsible for the educational, moral, and religious upbringing of their children. Anyone trying to assume control of the children against the parents’ wishes (at least on the frontier) would have probably been shot peremptorily. This was the attitude of the rugged individualist whose schooling was “unsystematic, discontinuous, and unregulated” by the State. [241]

So how is it that people who rejected government schools, objected to paying taxes for their support, and opposed compulsory attendance laws are today called “dissenters”? How and why is it that Americans have moved from the acceptance of parental responsibility for their children’s schooling to a position according the State the major decision-making power over their children’s education? In short, why aren’t the “dissenters” those who called for State control? The short answer: the State so legitimized itself in the eyes of its citizens that they readily acceded to the State’s philosophical position. Thus, the new norm became State control and those who opposed it became dissenters, even though parental control has been the naturally accepted way throughout much of human history.

The “dissenting tradition” in England and the United States traces its roots back to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 in England. Anyone who refused to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Anglican Church found themselves labeled as a “dissenter” or “nonconformist.” Every schoolmaster and every private school had to “conform to the liturgy of the Church of England.” In order to avoid both persecution and prosecution, much of “Nonconformist education went underground, so to speak.” The Dissenting Academies became well-known for “their innovation and scholarship.” “No one, indeed, in eighteenth-century England, could claim the title ‘friends of liberty’ ... with more justification than the Dissenters, for they were enamoured not only of their own liberty in matters of religious conscience but also of secular causes resting on the inherent rights of human personality, wherever they were in question.” [Smith 114]

The main theme of *The Dissenting Tradition In American Education* is that:

As was the case with the traditional established churches in Old Europe and early America, however, individuals and groups have expressed objections to [both government control and support of religion and schooling]. Since ... [public schooling’s] inception in the mid-1800s, they have dissented on religious, cultural, philosophical, and/or pedagogical grounds. [4] [D]issenters have claimed that tax-supported, state-regulated, compulsory public schooling violates the rights of conscience and religious liberty. Specifically, they have objected to the prevailing orthodoxy, purveyed by the state through its public schools in a given era, to paying twice for mandated education (taxes and tuition) in order to exercise their right to educate their children according to their beliefs, and to intrusive state regulations of alternative educational arrangements that embody worldviews that differ from ... [the] public orthodoxy. [266-267] The present volume focuses on episodes of religiously and/or culturally motivated dissent from the prevailing orthodoxy of public [school] education, universal taxation for public schools, government responsibility for schooling, and state attempts to control nonconforming schools. It is not a comprehensive history of dissent in American education. [4]

The book discusses a number of prominent personalities who opposed public education, in one way or another. “Chapter 2 features the dissenting role of the aggressive nineteenth-century Catholic Bishop of New York City, John Hughes, called ‘Dagger John’ by one of his biographers.”

Hughes claimed that it was unfair to tax Catholics “for schools that their faith would not permit their children to attend.” [5] His support for parochial schools never wavered, even after he was unsuccessful in his campaign to obtain public funds for the schools run by the Church. Chapter 6 focuses on three nineteenth-century Presbyterian dissenters: Charles Hodge, Robert L. Dabney, and William M. Beckner. Hodge, a long-time theologian who taught at Princeton Seminary for more than 50 years, advocated Presbyterian parochial schools unless the government-run schools embraced “religious instruction in the basic doctrines of Protestantism.” Dabney, of whom we shall hear more about later, opposed the establishment of state-run schools in his home state, Virginia, and argued that the family and parents, not the government, should be the primary agency responsible for the education of children. Beckner, a Presbyterian layman and Kentucky state legislator supported the “fledgling public school system in the 1870s and 1880s.” When the Kentucky state Constitution underwent revisions in 1890, he became concerned that all students would be forced to attend government-run schools. He sponsored a statement in the “Kentucky Bill of Rights that forbade the state from forcing parents to send their children to a school to which they were conscientiously opposed.” [7]

The next three chapters of the book deal with dissent during the last half of the twentieth-century. During the early 1970s, numerous Christian day schools appeared “throughout the country and were often involved in clashes with state authorities regarding regulatory issues.” In 1976, the Ohio Supreme Court handed down a decision regarding the legality of The Tabernacle Christian School founded by Pastor Levi Whisner. “It ruled that Ohio’s detailed accreditation standards” were unconstitutional when applied to religious schools, and that those religious schools “were not subject to regulations that in effect compromised the ability of the schools to carry out their mission.” As homeschooling became popular during the 1980s and 1990s, school officials in nearly every state tried to impose reporting, teaching certification, and testing requirements. In South Carolina “a group of homeschool advocates mounted a successful effort to pass legislation that recognized the supervisory authority of an association run by and for homeschoolers as an alternative to government approval.” [8-9]

As long-time readers of *The Voluntaryist* know, I am a homeschooling parent and have written many articles in defense of parental control and educational freedom. I am what our authors would call a dissenter, but it is strange that only one of the dissenters they describe comes anywhere close to the voluntaryist position. Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898) was born and

raised in Virginia, pastored his first church in 1846, and eventually became a professor of theology and philosophy at the University of Texas, Austin. In 1879 and 1880, he published two articles against government-run education in the *Princeton Review*. “Dabney vigorously asserted that God had designated the family, not the church or the state, as the agency in charge of the education of children.” He prophesied (correctly) that “state-sponsored schooling would inevitably devolve into a thoroughly secularized, atheistic education.” [178] As our authors explain, Dabney

rejected the very concept of state-sponsored schooling. His argument against public schooling rested on the assumption that the family was the primary unit of society. He maintained that parents were, or ought to be, the sole agents of the family. The state’s duty was to protect the family, not to interfere with it, especially by usurping one of the family’s principal functions, namely, the education of children. Basing his position on, among other things, an exegesis of Genesis and the Fifth Commandment, the Presbyterian theologian asserted that God held parents alone responsible for their children’s intellectual, moral, and spiritual training. [179]

In his article, “Secularized Education,” Dabney pointed out that his theory of parental control makes the parent sovereign “during the child’s mental and moral minority.” What, he asks, if the parent forms “his child amiss”? Well, “inasmuch as that supreme authority must be placed somewhere, God has indicated that, on the whole, no place is so safe for it as the hands of the parent, who has the supreme love for the child and the superior opportunity. He acknowledged that parents occasionally neglected their children, but so did the government.” [paragraph 43, page 13, and also see 184]

‘In an imperfect state of society,’ Dabney reasoned in language similar to that of today’s educational dissenters, ‘the instances of parental abuse of the educational function will be partial and individual.’ [184] Yes, [but] does the State never neglect and pervert its powers? With the lessons of history to teach us the horrible and almost universal abuses of power in the hands of civil rulers, that question is conclusive. In the case of an unjust and godless State, the evil would be universal and sweeping. [paragraph 43, page 13]

And have we not seen this coercive monopolization of education nearly result in the abandonment of the most effective method of early

reading instruction (phonics)? The widespread disaster of teaching several generations of children the look-say method of reading could have only been avoided if educational freedom had been embraced. [Coulson 367]

While I share Dabney's emphasis on parental control over the educational process, he still admitted a certain ancillary role for the State, one which I cannot accept. Nevertheless, he was at least aware of the dangers of having government involved in education. In the second of his two articles he "noted that the primary problem of free government was 'How to trust to fallible men enough power to govern, and yet prevent its perversion?' ... The very selfishness in them which makes them dangerous, Dabney maintained speaking of government officials, 'will be just as certain to prompt them to pervert the proposed check as to pervert any other public power.' He worried that with the power concentrated in the state school system those in control would be tempted to use the schools as 'propaganda for the rulers' partisan opinions ...'." [185] In short, he correctly perceived, as Jonathan Kozol wrote over a century later, that the "first goal and primary function of the U.S. public school is not to educate good people, but good citizens. It is the function which we call in enemy nations state indoctrination." [Kozol 1]

Dabney, it seems, never imagined that a free and virtuous society might function without the coercive institution known as the State. He never came near to embracing my oppositional principle to government. He opposed the operation of the State in specific areas of life, but he never wished to extirpate it entirely. In the mind of the voluntarist, the State is an invasive institution because it monopolizes certain public services in a given geographic area and because it obtains its revenues via taxation. The uniqueness of the voluntarist position within the dissenting tradition is that while it recognizes the deleterious effects of government involvement in specific areas of life, it goes further and questions the justice of taxation and the State itself. Thus, the question is not: "Is it right to spend public monies on religion or education, etc.,?", but rather: "Can taxation, as a coercive practice, be justified at all?" In other words, it doesn't matter how the State spends the money it coercively collects in taxes: taxation itself is theft and should be abandoned as a method of supporting social activities. Is the State a peaceful institution that society requires in order to survive, or is the State a parasitical and inherently criminal organization because it confiscates property and/or imprisons people who choose not to contribute to its support? Are people who offer peaceful and voluntary methods of competing with the State's provision of schools, mail delivery, medical care, etc. to be called outlaws and imprisoned?

Inasmuch as the dissenting tradition originated in opposition to State control and State support of religion, Carper and Hunt emphasize the similarities in the arguments of those who argued for religious freedom centuries ago, and those who have or now argue for educational freedom. However, it seems they fail to recognize that every argument in favor of religious freedom and educational freedom can be equally applied to arguing against the existence of the State itself. Just as religious dissenters demanded that all religions and churches be supported by voluntary membership and voluntary giving, so the educational voluntarist demands that all schools be supported by voluntary participation and voluntary giving. Both groups oppose taxation for the purpose of maintaining a State religion or State educational establishment, and members of both groups resist compulsory attendance and/or compulsory membership in churches and schools. As Herbert Spencer recognized in 1842, the argument for religious freedom can be used to buttress the case of freedom in other spheres. The true basis of religious freedom is the natural rights of every man to his own person and property. The voluntarist insists that these natural rights be extended consistently to every sphere of peaceful human activity.

In fact, during the 1830s and 40s, there was a group of English voluntarists who urged free trade in education, just as they supported free trade in corn and cotton. Such leading voluntarists as Edward Baines, Jr. and Edward Miall “argued that government should have nothing at all to do with education.” They believed that “government would employ education for its own ends,” (teaching habits of obedience and indoctrination) and that government-controlled schools would ultimately teach children to rely on the state for all things. Baines, for example, noted that “[w]e cannot violate the principles of liberty in regard to education without furnishing at once a precedent and inducement to violate them in regard to other matters.” He also argued that deficiencies in the then current system of education (both private and charitable) were no justification for State interference. Should freedom of the press be compromised because we have bad newspapers? “I maintain that Liberty is the chief cause of excellence; but it would cease to be Liberty if you proscribed everything inferior.” [Smith 121-124] As advocates of the free market have constantly pointed out, schools that do not offer educational services that are satisfactory to their customers “will be forced out of existence by competition, because parents will not have to continue sending their children to those schools. Excellence will breed further excellence.” [McCarthy, et. al. 133]

One of the chief aims of dissenters, both in England and North America was epitomized by William McLoughlin, author of *New England Dissent: 1630-1833*, when he wrote that “the principal aspect of the struggle against the Puritan establishment” in America was “the effort to abolish compulsory tax support for any and all denominations.” But if religious taxes are coercive and to be resisted, why not school taxes, and every other form of taxation? The principle at work is the same regardless of the purpose behind the tax. Property must be forcibly taken from some people and applied in ways which they (the owners) would not ordinarily direct it. As McLoughlin wrote, taxes were justified because it was believed that “the authority of the church [wa]s as essential to the continued existence of civil society as that of the [S]tate.”

The question of support for religion was often compared to the responsibility of the state toward all institutions concerning the general welfare – the courts, the roads, the schools, the armed forces. If justice, commerce, education, religion, and peace were essential to the general welfare, then ought these not to be supported out of general taxation? It was no more inconsistent in the minds of most New Englanders to require a general tax for the support of religion than to require, as Jefferson advocated, a general tax for the creation and maintenance of a public school system. [McLoughlin 610]

Who was being inconsistent? Those who called for the cessation of religious taxes should have also called for the cessation of school taxes, as well as of all other taxes.

Thus, the voluntaryist does not argue for the abolition of school taxes, but for the removal of all taxes. The voluntaryist does not argue for separation of church and State or for the separation of schools and State, but rather for the abandonment of the State. These issues, by the way they are framed assume that the State must, and should, exist. Freedom and men’s natural rights are of one piece. If they may be violated in one area of life, they may by the same reasoning be breached in another. So long as the State exists, it must necessarily violate the property rights of those over whom it rules. Religious freedoms, educational freedoms, commercial freedoms, are all endangered by the State. It is too bad that so few in the dissenting tradition have understood this truth. Carper and Hunt conclude their book with a plea for “disestablishment a second time.” As a voluntaryist I advocate “disestablishment for the last and final time.” Hopefully, Messrs. Carper and Hunt and my readers understand the import

of what I mean: the abandonment of the State and its replacement by voluntary organizations once and for all.

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If You Have A Tool, You'll Probably Use It: On the Evolution of Tax-Supported Schools in Certain Parts of the United States

By Carl Watner

In 2008, I discovered a two-volume set of books entitled *Universal Education In The South* (1936) by Charles Dabney. The author was the son of Reverend Robert Lewis Dabney (1820- 1898), who had been a professor at the Union Theological Seminary in Richmond and was especially well-known for his attacks on government education in 1876. Volume I, which covered "From the Beginning to 1900," was so fascinating that I purchased my own used copy and began research on the rise of tax-supported schooling. As the sub-title of this article indicates, it does not relate to the activities of such people as Horace Mann, Calvin Stowe, and others who "imported" the Prussian model of government schools into other parts of the United States. That has been dealt with elsewhere, such as in Samuel L. Blumenfeld's *Is Public Education Necessary?* (1981). Dabney points out, "the idea of free universal education was practically unknown in the countries from which the early settlers came, and it developed very slowly in America." [1] Where did this idea that schools should be funded by the government (in the Southern states) originate, and how did local Southern governments overcome their citizenry's natural reluctance to pay taxes to support them? The purpose of this article is to shed some light on the answers to these questions, and to quote some of the rhetoric used to convince Southerners that taxation was in their best interests, and that they should rely upon governments, rather than voluntarism, to direct the education of their children.

In early American colonial history, the formal provision of education was primarily a function reserved to the wealthy and upper classes of society. Among the lower classes, it was common for parents and ministers to supply the rudiments of learning. It was not until after the Revolutionary War that a major societal concern surfaced regarding education. Among the constitutions of the original thirteen states, only North Carolina's and

Pennsylvania's mentioned the subject, authorizing the establishment of at least one school in each county, "with such salaries to the masters, paid by the public." At that time, education was certainly not considered a function of the national government. There was no mention of the subject in either the Declaration of Independence or the federal Constitution. Here was an opportunity for voluntarism to have flourished. As Dabney wrote:

A great advance in educational enterprises of a private and ecclesiastical character followed [the Revolution]. The wealthy established private schools. Academies and colleges were started wherever a few pupils could be gathered together and teachers found. A new ideal of education was in the making, but universal education at public cost, as a practical possibility, was still undreamed of. [2]

Perhaps the first well-known personage in this country to broach the idea of "free" government-provided schooling for all students was Thomas Jefferson. In 1779, he presented his "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" to the Virginia Legislature. The bill provided for three years of elementary school training for all children, rich and poor (though slave children would have been excluded). Although Massachusetts claims to have enacted the first public school law in America in 1647, in New England public education was considered a function of the church, while in Virginia and the rest of the South it was considered a function of the state. [3] Jefferson's view was that "The state must provide for the education of all its citizens and this it should do through local agencies." [4]

To show the progression of this idea of "universal education at state expense for all" over the next one hundred years, we need to look no further than John B. Minor's *Institutes of Common and Statute Law*, published in 1876. According to Minor,

There are but four modes of general education possible - namely:

1. Every parent may be left to provide for his children such instruction as he can, without the government concerning itself therewith.
2. The government may undertake to assist the *indigent alone*, leaving the rest of the community to shift for themselves.
3. The government may give *partial aid to all*, leaving each some additional expense, much or little, to bear, in the shape of tuition fee, or otherwise.
4. The government may provide, at the common expense, for the complete *elementary instruction* of all classes, just as it provides for the protection of all. [5]

The two basic assumptions embraced by the idea of universal public schools were: 1) "that education is a function of the State rather than a family or parental obligation;" and 2) "that the State has the right and power to raise by taxation" the funds required to adequately support the schools. [6] Some of the principal impediments to the implementation of these ideas were 1) the general public's dislike of taxation; 2) parental rejection of the idea that the State should be responsible for their offspring; and 3) the humiliation attached to the idea that their children would be attending "free" public schools. (Hitherto, only the poorest of the poor would accept government handouts.) [7]

Minor's analysis reveals that the opening wedge of government involvement in education was legislation regarding orphans and indigent children. Although in both England and its colonies it was common for wealthy benefactors to endow charity schools for the poor, government legislation required that the overseers of the poor obtain an order from their county court to place those children likely to become a burden to the parish (such as beggars, orphans, paupers, and illegitimate children) into apprenticeships. [8] Masters were not only responsible for teaching their charges a trade, but were obligated to instruct their apprentices in reading, writing, and common arithmetic. [9] The humanitarian movement, which advocated giving poor children an opportunity for education, supported the idea that the State was responsible for the education of those children whose parents were not likely to attend to the matter themselves. [10] As Edgar Knight, another historian of public schools in the South, observed: By the time of the American Revolution, "the theory was gaining that caring for and educating and training poor children were functions of the State." [11]

Thomas Jefferson, however, approached universal education from another point of view. His belief was that it was the business of the State to educate because a free country required an intelligent citizenry. [12] "Enlighten the people generally and tyranny and oppressions ... will vanish" "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be." [13] According to Jefferson, "schools ... must be provided by the state" because to give "information to the people ... is the most certain, and the most legitimate engine of government." [14]

After Jefferson was elected governor of Virginia in 1776, he became personally involved in the revision of the state's laws. In June 1779, the committee of revision presented the legislature with one hundred and twenty-six bills, among which were some Jefferson himself had principally written. The two most germane to our discussion here are his "Bill for the

More General Diffusion of Knowledge” and “A Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom.” In the former he proposed three years of government-paid elementary schooling for all children, rich and poor alike; college (high schools) for those requiring a middle level of instruction; and finally a state-sponsored university and library to complete the educational edifice. Each county was to be divided into wards or districts, and the voters of each ward were to tax themselves in order to support their own local schools. This thoroughly socialist plan is what Dabney described as “the first proposal ever made for local taxation for public schools” in America. [15] Another interesting aspect of Jefferson’s advocacy was his belief that those who could neither read nor write should be denied state citizenship and the right to vote. [16] Although Jefferson supported compulsory taxation to provide public schools, “he took a moderate position on compulsory education.” [17] Jefferson did not believe it was proper to force a parent to educate his child. As Jefferson wrote:

It is better to tolerate the rare instance of a parent refusing to let his child be educated, than to shock the common feelings and ideas by the [felonious removal of the child from the parent’s custody] and [by the] education of the infant against the will of the father. [18]

In contrast, in his bill for establishing religious freedom Jefferson took a very libertarian position against all the elements of a state religion. He rejected state-licensed clergy, he refused to endorse state-approved prayer, curriculum, textbooks, compulsory attendance laws, and state-compelled financing. One wonders why Jefferson did not realize that the same principles that apply to state religious establishments apply to state educational establishments. [19] For example, Jefferson held that religion was a natural right of mankind, just as he supported the “unalienable rights of parents to direct the education of their children.” [20] However, on the issue of public taxation to support the church and the school, Jefferson took contradictory positions. “He declared that ‘to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves is sinful and tyrannical’ and ‘that even forcing him to support this or that teacher of his own religious persuasion, is depriving him of the comfortable liberty of giving his contributions to the particular pastor whose morals he would make his pattern,’ ...” [21] Despite his realization that coercion was wrong in the case of religion, Jefferson did not recognize that it was “unjust to take the property of one man to educate the children of another. ... In essence Jefferson didn’t apply his own professed

principles against coercive financing” of religion when it came “to education like he [sh]ould have.” [22] This error, from its small beginnings in Jefferson’s legislative bill, has led to massive state-run educational establishments all across the United States.

Government legislation on the subject of the poor and of apprentices was based on several questionable assumptions. The first assumption was that such children were entitled to the basics of an education. If they were, then such a service must be provided by their parents, the government, or some charitable institution. [23] Most proponents of an educational entitlement thought that it should be the responsibility of the State to provide children with schooling. Finally, it was assumed that no other means of accomplishing this goal existed, even though there was plenty of evidence that various types of education were being provided under voluntarism.

Jefferson and others after him extended the first assumption by claiming that all children had a right to an education. The only question to be answered was: At whose expense? Jefferson’s answer was that the citizens of the county or ward should be taxed to provide all the children in their local jurisdiction with schools. Why didn’t the church reformers, Jefferson, and others of the time eschew the State and depend upon voluntary efforts? The only answer I have is this: the State was there. The human tendency is to take the easy way out. If the State had not been there, those advocating schooling for the uneducated poor would have had to 1) either organize the State from scratch; 2) dig into their own pockets and help fund that which they were advocating; or 3) organize (themselves and in concert with others who shared their idea) the necessary number of charity schools to provide education for the poor. Given the existence of the State, its prior concern with the indigent and their education, they took the easy way out: they advocated taxation. Why Jefferson couldn’t see the parallels between state provision of religion and state provision of education is an unexplainable anomaly. It is comparable to his being an owner of slaves when writing that “all men are created equal” in the Declaration of Independence.

Despite Jefferson’s advocacy of public schools, the idea of universal, state-paid education did not come about quickly. Educational historians of the South, time and time again, repeat that many Southerners had a “natural reluctance to being taxed.” Furthermore, the historians note that many Southerners held to the idea that it was not the function of the State to educate; that education was not conducive to good citizenship, that State instruction was a usurpation of parental rights, and that Negroes should never be educated. [24]. Here are some additional commentaries:

Local taxation of property for the support of community schools, entirely free and open to rich and poor alike, was not a popular measure. Two centuries of apprenticeship and poor laws had not developed a strong enough demand for the new type of education to overcome the dread of cost in taxes or to enforce the acceptance of the principle that the [S]tate should compel a man to tax himself for the education of his neighbor's children. [25]

The traditional hatred of taxes was universal in the South. The planters looked upon internal improvements [roads] as they did upon education, as mere excuses for taxation, and all taxation to them was evil. [26]

All taxes were an abomination to early Americans and taxation for schools was unthinkable for the old Virginians. If there were to be schools and institutions for learning, the funds for them must be provided in some other way than through taxes on property. [27]

The provision of education by the state to paupers expressed the prevailing idea of the people that a man's children should be educated by himself in his own social status, if possible, and that only the poor should be provided with the elements of an education at the expense of the [S]tate. The ruling class believed that any extended education of the masses would lead to unrest, to disappointment and to what the aristocrats called "leveling." Their view was that the [S]tate should not interfere in the education of the children except when charity absolutely demanded it. [28]

In 1872, James Killebrew was appointed assistant superintendent of schools in Tennessee. His salary was paid by the Peabody Education Fund. The greatest obstacle to the establishment of a real system of schools, declared Killebrew, was the old idea that education should be left to private enterprise; that it was wrong to tax the rich for the education of the poor; that the [S]tate had no right to compel a father to educate his children, much less those of his neighbor; that such procedure would tend to destroy the sense of obligation of the citizens to the discharge of their duty to their children and those of their fellow citizens. [29]

Aversion to taxation has been the great obstacle to the schools in the Southern States. Taxes are simply money paid for civilized government. The savage alone is exempt from taxation. We were formerly taught that the best government was that which levied the smallest taxes. The future will teach that liberal taxation, fairly

levied and properly applied, is the chief mark of a civilized people. In the old days we heard that it was robbery to tax Brown's property to educate Jones' children. In the new day no one will question the right of the [S]tate to tax both Brown and Jones to develop the [S]tate through its children. [30]

It has often been said that one government intervention leads to another. In the historical case being examined here, we find this happening. When supporters of State education of the indigent discovered that "the poor would rather keep their children at home [rather] than to send them to free [State] schools where they were branded [as] paupers," they argued that ALL children, not just poor children should be educated at the expense of the State. "The true policy of the State is to recognize no distinction betwixt the rich and the poor; to put them all upon the same footing; ... " [31] In other words, if children of poor parents will not attend State schools, force everyone to attend State schools in order to avoid the stigma of 'pauper' schools.

The supporters of State-provided education had another way of defusing the objection to 'pauper' schools. As John Minor observed: "the government may give partial aid to all" via general taxation but still make every able-bodied father pay some of the additional cost of educating his children. This mixed method of local taxation and family contributions was known as the rate-bill system. Here is how it worked. Local school trustees contracted with a teacher for a term of teaching. At the end of the term, "they g[a]ve him an order upon the town superintendent for such portion of money as may have been voted by the district. ... If the public money [wa]s not sufficient to pay the teacher's wages, the trustees proceeded to make out a rate-bill for the residue, charging each parent or guardian, according to the number of days' attendance of his children." [32] Indigent families were exempt from such additional taxation. In New York State, during the late 1840s, "something like 40 per cent of the resources of the schools came from rates charged parents." [33]

The struggle for and against the rate-bill system ran in two directions. Parents who were assessed the extra charges wanted to foist those expenses upon the State in the form of general taxation upon everyone. On the other hand, the general taxpayers, especially those without children, wanted the families of students to pay as much as they could. Furthermore, since the rate-bill system required every family to pay in proportion to the attendance of their children, there was a great inducement for many parents to wink at the absence and truancy of their children from school. [34] The final outcome of the struggle against the rate-bill system was decided by

the immigrants who crowded into the large cities, such as New York. “They were without property to be taxed, but many of them had a vote, and they demanded education.” [35] The preponderance of the citizenry was in favor of “free elementary schools for all” and the last state to use the rate-bill system abandoned this method in 1871. [36]

Those who agitated to eliminate the rate-bill system advocated what they called “the free school” idea. This was the principle “that the schools should be absolutely free to all and supported at public and general expense.” [37] No longer would individual parents be assessed for sending their children to a local government school. Taxpayers who had no children would be forced to bear part of the expense of paying for the education of children via general taxation.

Some of the rhetoric to bring about this change is very interesting. In North Carolina, Calvin Henderson Wiley was “one of the most devoted champions of universal education our country has ever produced.” [38] He promoted state legislation which authorized the formation of districts permitting the people to tax themselves for their local schools if they desired to have them. He also assisted in founding “Library Associations” to help teachers collect books and establish circulating libraries. “Out of them grew county associations to improve the teachers, to diffuse knowledge on educational subjects, to overcome the prejudices against public schools, and to educate the public to tax themselves.” [39] State officials and school superintendents were also notorious for wanting to expand the role of their states in educational endeavors. As one commentator noted: “One of the duties of ... school officials was to create a public sentiment in favor of public schools.” [40] For example, we find in Gov. Reuben Chapman’s message to the Alabama legislature of November 18, 1849 the following:

The subject of the common schools deserves all the consideration and encouragement it is in the power of the assembly to bestow. The whole theory of our form of Government is based upon the capacity of the people. Without a general diffusion of intelligence among them, the machinery of a Government thus constituted can not be expected to move on successfully. The highest and most important of all the duties of a free Government is to advance the cause of education, and guard against that decline of liberty which results from neglecting the minds of the people. [41]

Fifty years later, State School Superintendent John W. Abercromie of Alabama speaking in 1900 said:

[I]f we would properly qualify our people for citizenship [we must] give to counties, townships, districts, and municipalities the power of taxation for educational purposes. If the people of any county, township, district, city or town desire to levy a tax upon their property to build a schoolhouse, or to supplement the State fund, for the purposes of educating their children, they should have the ... power to do it. ...There should be no limit ... to the power of the people who own property to tax themselves for the purpose of fitting the children of the State for intelligent and patriotic citizenship. [42]

Another organization that played a significant part in the expansion of government schools in the South was a charitable trust founded in 1867, by George Peabody (1795-1869), a wealthy Baltimore businessman. [43] The purpose of the Peabody trust was to encourage and promote schools in “those portions of our beloved and common country which ... suffered ... the destructive ravages ... of civil war.” [44] Although there was no stipulation in the original bequest of one million dollars, the trustees of the George Peabody Educational Fund made the decision that they would disburse funds only to those communities which would help themselves by raising matching funds through taxation. The Peabody Fund did not give aid to private or religious schools, or to any schools not affiliated with their State’s system. [45]

The Reverend Barnas Sears was named general agent of the fund and he became one of the leading agitators for free public elementary schools in the South after the Civil War. “Free schools for the whole people” became his motto. [46] According to Dabney. Dr. Sears “preached free public schools as a necessity in a democratic government.” [47] His stated goal was to teach the taxpayers of the South “that there is no more legitimate tax that can be levied on property than that for the education of the masses.” [48] Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry succeeded Sears in 1881. “When told that ‘the state had no right to tax one man to educate another man’s children, that it was dangerous to educate the masses, or that to educate a poor white or a Negro meant to make a criminal or to spoil a laborer’,” Curry’s reply was that “Ignorance is no remedy for anything. If the State has a right to live at all, it has a right to educate.” [49]

Conclusion

The State’s right to exist was certainly never called into question by any Southerners, even those who supported secession from the North. The

idea of “educating men for the service of the [S]tate traces back to Plato.” [50] Karl Marx embraced the idea in the tenth plank of *The Communist Manifesto*, which he and Engels published 1848: “Free education for all children in public schools.” In 1855, William Henry Ruffner, a Virginian, pointed out that “state education is but educational communism,” but even he and other opponents of government-run education never objected on general principles to the concept of taxation. [51] For example, Herbert Spencer in his 1842 series of articles “On the Proper Sphere of Government” never once questioned the propriety or morality of forcing people to contribute funds to a government which would then “administer justice.” Coming from a dissenting family, Spencer did recognize “the injustice of expecting men to assist in the maintenance of a plan of instruction which they do not approve; and forcing them to pay towards the expences [sic] of teaching, from which neither they nor their children derive any benefit.” [52] But apparently Spencer had no problem with forcing men to pay for police protection, defense from foreign enemies, and the settlement of legal disputes. In short, he did not object to taxation when it was used to support some function of government which he thought necessary or of which he approved.

To the voluntaryist, on the other hand, the very concept of taxation is morally wrong. Taxation is theft. Government agents must initiate force, or the threat of force, upon those who refuse to pay. R. C. Hoiles, founder of the *Freedom Newspapers*, was probably the first libertarian in the 20th Century to oppose government schools on the basis that they were tax-supported. He used to argue: if it is morally wrong for A to take money from B against B’s will, then it is wrong for A and C to take money from B. It is still wrong if A and C associate with hundreds of thousands of others to rob B. As he used to ask, at what point does the number of people involved in an act of thievery turn it into a morally proper activity? The answer should be obvious: a wrong is a wrong even if everyone supports it. [53]

In an exchange of letters on “Why Homeschool” in 1993, I wrote that the only consistent way to oppose government schools is to oppose them because they are tax-supported. [54] That means opposing every service government provides because everything the government does – from police protection, roads, courts, defense against foreign enemies to schools – is paid for via taxation. In short, that means opposing the very concept of government itself because government could not exist without taxation. Government violates the property rights of all those from whom it collects taxes. If it gave people the choice to pay for a service, or order less of it, or

decline its services altogether, without suffering any punishment, then there would be no difference in principle between such a government and a voluntary organization. People could shop for educational services wherever and however they chose. Yes, some people would remain unable to read or write, if they were not forced to attend schools, and if their parents were not forced to pay for their schooling. However, it is interesting to note that we have not overcome the problem of illiteracy even after a century and a half of educational coercion and government schools. On the other hand, we would have avoided all the ill-fated consequences of government in our lives and schooling.

Since voluntaryists are opposed to the use of coercion to support governments, the question of how government should spend its tax revenues disappears. Most voluntaryists support education, roads, and protection services. It is not these ends which they call into question, but rather the coercive means used by the State to provide them. Since taxation is theft, taxation cannot legitimately be used to attain any ends. And of one thing we can be certain: If you take care of the means, the end will take care of itself. And another: if you try to force the end, the means will destroy and vitiate whatever good intentions you start out with.

There is only one way to freedom and that is by voluntary means. All else will fail. But neither is there any guarantee that voluntaryism will succeed, but if it does, or at least to the extent that it does, we can be assured that it will depend on obtaining people's willing cooperation. Compelling them to "cooperate" is not only contradictory, but it will never work.

End Notes

[1] Charles William Dabney, *Universal Education In The South In Two Volumes*. All citations are to Volume I: From the Beginnings to 1900, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1936, p. 3. On the influence of the Prussian educational system in Virginia in the late 1830s, see Charles William Dabney, "Dr. Benjamin M. Smith's Report on the Prussian Primary School System," in four installments beginning in XVI *The Virginia Teacher* (September 1935), pp. 117-124.

[2] *ibid.*, p. 4.

[3] *ibid.*, p. 5.

[4] *ibid.*, p. 8.

[5] John B. Minor, *Institutes of Common and Statute Law*, Volume I, Second Edition, Richmond: Printed for the Author, 1876, Book I, Chapter XVI, p. 384. It is interesting to note how governments expanded Jefferson's idea of three months of schooling per year for three years to

nine or ten months of government education per year for twelve years.
Give governments an inch and they will take a mile!

[6] Edgar W. Knight, *Public Education in the South*, Boston: Ginn and Company, 1922, p. 161.

[7] *ibid.*, p. 146.

[8] *ibid.*, pp. 48-50 and p. 56.

[9] Minor, *op. cit.*, p. 396.

[10] Marcus W. Jernegan, "Compulsory Education in the Southern Colonies, XXVII *The School Review* (June 1919), pp. 405-425 at p. 414 and p. 422.

[11] Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

[12] John C. Henderson, *Thomas Jefferson's View on Public Education*, New York: AMS Press, 1970 (originally published 1890), p. 35.

[13] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

[14] *ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

[15] *ibid.*, p. 10.

[16] Henderson, *op. cit.*, pp. 344-345.

[17] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[18] Kerry L. Morgan, *Real Choice Real Freedom in American Education*, Lanham: University Press of America, 1997, p. 107 and p. 120 (Note 5).

[19] *ibid.*, p. 106.

[20] *ibid.*

[21] *ibid.*, p. 107.

[22] *ibid.*, pp. 107-108.

[23] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

[24] John Furman Thomason, *The Foundations of the Public Schools in South Carolina*, Columbia: The State Company, 1925, p. 223.

[25] William Arthur Maddox, *The Free School Idea in Virginia Before The Civil War*, New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University, 1918. Reprint edition by Arno Press and the New York Times, 1969, p. 16.

[26] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 30 and p. 31.

[27] *ibid.*, p. 35.

[28] *ibid.*, p. 40.

[29] *ibid.*, p. 302.

[30] *ibid.*, p. 204. This is a direct quote from Charles Duncan McIver, an agitator for public schools in North Carolina throughout the 1890s.

[31] *ibid.*, pp. 228-229.

[32] James B. Conant, *Thomas Jefferson and the Development of American Public Education*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962, pp. 33-34.

- [33] *ibid.*, p. 35
- [34] *ibid.*, p. 34.
- [35] *ibid.*, p. 36.
- [36] *ibid.*
- [37] Andrew Sloan Draper, *Origin and Development of the Common School System of the State of New York*, Syracuse: C. W. Bardeen, Publisher, 1903, p. 52.
- [38] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 168.
- [39] *ibid.*, p. 170.
- [40] Cornelius J. Heatwole, *A History of Education in Virginia*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1916, p. 228.
- [41] Stephen B. Weeks, *History of Public School Education in Alabama*, Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1915. Reprinted by Negro Universities Press, Westport, Connecticut, 1971, pp. 51-52.
- [42] *ibid.*, pp. 135-136. Also cited in Knight, *op. cit.*, pp. 423-424.
- [43] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 106.
- [44] Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 384.
- [45] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 111 and p. 116.
- [46] Knight, *op. cit.*, p. 386. Barnas Sears (1802-1880) had been “the successor to Horace Mann in the office of the Board of Education of Massachusetts” (Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 111).
- [47] Dabney, *op. cit.*, p. 421.
- [48] *ibid.*, p. 119.
- [49] *ibid.*, p. 123 and p. 128.
- [50] *ibid.*, p. 13.
- [51] William Henry Ruffner, “State Education Radically Wrong,” forthcoming in *The Voluntaryist*. Originally written and published anonymously in the *Presbyterian Critic* (1855) and reprinted 40 *Southern Planter and Farmer* (April 1879).
- [52] Herbert Spencer, *The Proper Sphere of Government*, with an Introduction by George H. Smith. Special reprint from *Rampart Individualist: A Journal of Free Market Scholarship*, Vol. I, No. 1 & 2 (no date), p. 85. “The Proper Sphere of Government” was originally published in Edward Miall’s *The Nonconformist* in twelve parts, beginning in June 1842.
- [53] “R. C. Hoiles Revisited,” *THE VOLUNTARYIST*, Whole No. 146, 3rd Quarter 2010, pp. 2-3. Originally printed in the Colorado Springs *GAZETTE-TELEGRAPH*, July 11, 1972, p. 6-A.
- [54] “Why Homeschool?”, Excerpts of Correspondence between Helen Hegener and Carl Watner, Whole No. 65, *The Voluntaryist*, December

1993, and reprinted in Carl Watner, editor, *I Must Speak Out*, San Francisco: Fox and Wilkes, 1999, pp. 177-181.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 146, pp. 1, 3-7, 3rd Quarter 2010)

Section III

Government Schools – Criticisms and Objections

It is easy to be negative and critical of existing institutions. It is much harder to be constructive and create new and vibrant ones. Nonetheless, gathered together in this section are to be found a wide variety of criticisms of our contemporary government schools. They range from John Gatto's observation that government "schools don't educate" to R. C. Hoiles' claim that government schools cannot teach the great moral truths. Contemporary critics of government schooling mainly object to the fact that government does a poor job of teaching; they seldom object to the underlying premise that government should exist at all, or that if government should exist, there is no reason for it to be in the business of providing education.

Libertarian critics of government schooling in the United States have existed since public schools were established in Massachusetts in the mid-1800s. In 1855, William Henry Ruffner wrote an article in the *Presbyterian Critic* titled "State Education Radically Wrong." Benjamin Tucker in *The Word* in 1876 pointed out the implications of government schools: "All our liberties would be destroyed." Bishop B J McQuaid in an 1881 article in *The North American Review* perceptively pointed out that the principle "underlying the state school system is its unadulterated communism." If the state may relieve parents of their obligation to educate their children, why should it not relieve them of the responsibility of providing them with food, shelter, and clothing?

As I have pointed out in innumerable articles in *The Voluntaryist* government is necessarily coercive and could not exist without the collection of taxes. Government schools could not exist without coercion and tax funding. Do away with these two elements of the State and government schools could not exist. Simplistic? It may be, but in a nutshell it contains the voluntaryist critique of government and government schools.

The Threat of Voluntary Associations

By David Glasner

The notion that a regime – even a totalitarian regime – could survive the universal disapproval of its subjects is difficult to comprehend. Ordinarily one would assume that a nearly unanimous desire by the subjects of a regime to oust it eventually would make it impossible for the regime to retain power. After all, the regime couldn't function if all those who wished to see it replaced stopped carrying out orders. However, unless a sufficient number of people simultaneously stop following orders, it is suicidal for any one person to stop obeying. The goal of a totalitarian regime is therefore to isolate individuals: to manipulate the information available to them so completely that they do not realize that opponents are in the majority, or, even if they do realize it, that they don't trust their compatriots enough to risk exposing themselves.

What a regime must avoid at all costs is a chain reaction in which the opposition of a single individual or a group induces others to resist its authority. That is why it is so important for an unpopular regime to create the illusion of popular support, misleading its opponents into believing that they, and not the regime and its supporters, are in the minority. There is strength in numbers. And believing in one's strength creates courage.

Control over information is absolutely necessary for such a regime. Not only would information about the true (miserable) state of affairs create further opposition, but even the existence of internal opposition cannot be acknowledged. The transmission of such information could encourage latent opposition to surface elsewhere. Individuals must be convinced 1) that opposition does not exist, and 2) that even if it did, its chances for success would be nil. If there are opponents they must be branded as tools of external forces and condemned as traitors.

The few people who start an uprising must take extraordinary risks, because they must expose themselves in the expectation that their example will attract the support of others who will join them in defying the regime. But if too few follow their lead, the leaders will have sacrificed themselves in a futile gesture. Moreover, any organized opposition to the regime requires communication between individuals. If no one expresses his thoughts of opposition to anyone else, opposition to the regime can be virtually unanimous and yet be ineffectual.

Thus, to eradicate all possible opposition, an unpopular regime determined to stay in power must suppress any form of social intercourse – indeed any social relationship – that is outside the master-subordinate relationship it imposes on its subjects. Any social relationship is a potential threat to the regime because it allows the transfer of information that could be inimical to its interests. But more fundamentally, even the mere expression of thoughts, feelings, and emotions creates a degree of intimacy, trust, and obligation that the regime cannot easily tolerate. Even if the thoughts, feelings, and emotions are completely unrelated to the regime (which as the regime becomes more intrusive into the lives of its subjects becomes ever less likely) the expression of those thoughts, feelings, and emotions is potentially subversive because such expressions build the mutual trust that would allow people to discuss the regime and to voice (however softly and discreetly) their opposition to it.

It was thus profoundly insightful for George Orwell in *1984* to have focused his portrayal of Big Brother's destruction of all opposition on the power to force two lovers to betray each other. Any feeling of intimacy, trust, and mutual dependence by two people for each other was by its nature subversive to Big Brother and had to be extirpated.

All voluntary associations of individuals are suspect under a totalitarian regime and are either suppressed or subverted. Obviously no independent political parties or political associations, no independent labor unions or professional associations, no independent business or enterprise, not even an independent sports team or cultural organization can be tolerated. Religious institutions must therefore either be suppressed outright or co-opted through infiltration by agents of the regime.

Not only is every organized social association suppressed or subverted, but informal social relationships including (indeed, especially) family relationships are controlled or perverted by the regime. The regime assumes the burden of raising and educating (indoctrinating) children. It teaches them to reserve feelings of loyalty and devotion for the regime, not their parents. Loyalty to anything or anyone other than the regime is an intolerable offense. Indeed, loyalty to the regime can best be demonstrated by betraying one's parents or loved ones by denouncing them for disloyalty to the regime.

A totalitarian regime is therefore driven to destroy all relationships that characterize a normally functioning society, because all such relationships create a contest within which opposition feeling could be nurtured, articulated, and perhaps channeled into concrete actions. To convince people that any act of opposition is futile and pointless, they must

be cut off from all forms of authentic social intercourse and genuine comradeship. What is left is a collection of disconnected and disoriented individuals whose only meaningful relationship is with the regime. Indeed, any meaningful relationship to which the regime is not a party, is from the standpoint of the regime, a kind of treachery.

Excerpted from “The End of Communism,” *The Freeman*, March 1991, pp. 102-104.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 52, p. 7-8, October 1991)

Why Schools Don't Educate

By John Gatto

[Editor's Note: The author, John Gatto, has taught in the public schools for over 25 years, and in 1990, was named New York City's Teacher of the Year. The following excerpts comprise the bulk of his acceptance speech for this award. It is reprinted from The Blumenfeld Education Letter (Box 45161, Boise, ID. 85711), May 1991, where it was noted that this is "probably the most incisive and eloquent indictment of public education ever written."]

... We live in a time of great social crisis. Our children rank at the bottom of nineteen industrial nations in reading, writing, and arithmetic. The world's narcotic economy is based upon our own consumption of the commodity. If we didn't buy so many powdered dreams the business would collapse – and schools are an important sales outlet. Our teenage suicide rate is the highest in the world – and suicidal kids are rich kids for the most part, not the poor. In Manhattan seventy percent of all new marriages last less than five years.

Our school crisis is a reflection of this greater social crisis. We seem to have lost our identity. Children and old people are penned up and locked away from the business of the world to a degree without precedent; nobody talks to them anymore. Without children and old people mixing in daily life, a community has no future and no past, only a continuous present. In fact, the name "community" hardly applies to the way we interact with each other. We live in networks, not communities, and everyone I know is lonely because of that. In some strange way school is a major actor in this tragedy, just as it is a major actor in the widening gulf among social classes. Using school as a sorting mechanism, we appear to be on the way to creating a caste system, complete with untouchables who wander through subway trains begging and sleeping on the streets.

I've noticed a fascinating phenomenon in my twenty-five years of teaching – that schools and schooling are increasingly irrelevant to the great enterprise of the planet. No one believes anymore that scientists are trained in science classes, or politicians in civics classes, or poets in English classes. This is a great mystery to me because thousands of humane, caring people work in schools as teachers and aides and administrators, but the abstract logic of the institution overwhelms their individual contributions. Although teachers do care and do work very, very

hard, the institution is psychopathic; it has no conscience. It rings a bell, and the young man in the middle of writing a poem must close his notebook and move to a different cell, where he learns that man and monkeys derive from a common ancestor.

Our form of compulsory schooling is an invention of the State of Massachusetts around 1850. It was resisted – sometimes with guns – by an estimated eighty percent of the Massachusetts population, the last outpost in Barnstable on Cape Cod not surrendering its children until the 1880s, when the area was seized by militia and children marched to school under guard.

Now here is a curious idea to ponder. Senator Ted Kennedy's office released a paper not too long ago claiming that prior to compulsory education the state literacy rate was ninety-eight percent, and after it the figure never again reached above ninety-one percent, where it stands in 1990. I hope that interests you.

Here is another curiosity to think about. The home-schooling movement has quietly grown to a size where one and a half million young people are being educated entirely by their own parents. Last month the education press reported the amazing news that children schooled at home seem to be five or even ten years ahead of their formally trained peers in their ability to think.

I don't think we'll get rid of schools anytime soon, certainly not in my lifetime, but if we're going to change what's rapidly becoming a disaster of ignorance, we need to realize that the school institution "schools" very well, but it does not "educate" – that's inherent in the design of the thing. It's not the fault of bad teachers or too little money spent. It's just impossible for education and schooling ever to be the same thing.

Schools were designed by Horace Mann and Barnas Sears and W.R. Harper of the University of Chicago and Thorndyke of Columbia Teachers College and others to be instruments of the scientific management of a mass population. Schools are intended to produce, through the application of formulae, formulaic human beings whose behavior can be predicted and controlled.

To a very great extent schools succeed in doing this. But our society is disintegrating, and in such a society the only successful people are self-reliant, confident, and individualistic – because the community life which protects the dependent and the weak is dead. The products of schooling are, as I've said, irrelevant. Well-schooled people are irrelevant. They can sell film and razor blades, push paper and talk on telephones, or sit mindlessly before a flickering computer terminal, but as human beings

they are useless – useless to others and useless to themselves.

The daily misery around us is, I think, in large measure caused by the fact that – as Paul Goodman put it thirty years ago – we force children to grow up absurd. Any reform in schooling has to deal with its absurdities.

It is absurd and anti-life to be part of a system that compels you to listen to a stranger reading poetry when you want to learn to construct buildings, or to sit with a stranger discussing the construction of buildings when you want to read poetry.

It is absurd and anti-life to move from cell to cell at the sound of a gong for every day of your youth, in an institution that allows you no privacy and even follows you into the sanctuary of your home, demanding that you do its “homework.”

“How will they learn to read?!” you say, and my answer is, “Remember the lessons of Massachusetts.” When children are given whole lives instead of age-graded ones in cellblocks, they learn to read, write, and do arithmetic with ease if those things make sense in the life that unfolds around them.

But keep in mind that in the United States almost nobody who reads, writes, or does arithmetic gets much respect. We are a land of talkers; we pay talkers the most and admire talkers the most and so our children talk constantly, following the public models of television and schoolteachers. It is very difficult to teach the “basics” anymore because they really aren't basic to the society we've made.

Two institutions, television and school, at present control our children's lives, in that order. Both of them reduce the real world of wisdom, fortitude, temperance, and justice to a never-ending non-stop abstraction. In centuries past the time of a child and adolescent would be occupied in real work, real charity, real adventures, and the real search for mentors who might teach what one really wanted to learn. A great deal of time was spent in community pursuits, practicing affection, meeting and studying every level of the community, learning how to make a home, and dozens of other tasks necessary to becoming a whole man or woman.

But here is the calculus of time the children I teach must deal with:

Out of the one hundred sixty-eight hours in each week, my children sleep fifty-six. That leaves them one hundred twelve hours a week in which to grow up.

My children attend school thirty hours a week, use about eight hours getting ready, going and coming home, and spend an average of seven hours a week in homework – a total of forty five hours. During that time they are under constant surveillance, having no private time or private

space, and are disciplined if they try to assert individuality in the use of time or space. That leaves twelve hours a week out of which to create a unique consciousness. Of course my kids eat, too, and that takes some time – not much, because we’ve lost the tradition of family dining. If we allot three hours a week to evening meals, we arrive at a net amount of private time for each child of nine hours.

It’s not enough. It’s not enough, is it? The richer the kid, of course, the less television he watches, but the rich kid’s time is just as narrowly proscribed by a broader catalogue of commercial entertainments and his inevitable assignment to a series of private lessons in areas seldom of his choice.

And these things are, oddly enough, just a more cosmetic way to create dependent human beings, unable to fill their own hours, unable to initiate lines of meaning to give substance and pleasure to their existence. It’s a national disease, this dependency and aimlessness, and I think schooling and television and lessons – the entire Chautauqua idea – have a lot to do with it.

Think of the things that are killing us as a nation; drugs, brainless competition, recreational sex, the pornography of violence, gambling, alcohol, and the worst pornography of all – lives devoted to buying things, accumulation as a philosophy. All are addictions of dependent personalities and that is what our brand of schooling must inevitably produce.

I want to tell you what the effect is on children of taking all their time – time they need to grow up – and forcing them to spend it on abstractions. No reform that doesn’t attack these specific pathologies will be anything more than a facade.

The children I teach are indifferent to the adult world. This defies the experience of thousands of years. A close study of what big people were up to was always the most exciting occupation of youth, but nobody wants to grow up these days, and who can blame them? Toys are us.

The children I teach have almost no curiosity, and what little they do have is transitory; they cannot concentrate for very long, even on things they choose to do. Can you see a connection between the bells ringing again and again to change classes and this phenomenon of evanescent attention?

The children I teach have a poor sense of the future, of how tomorrow is inextricably linked to today. They live in a continuous present; the exact moment they are in is the boundary of their consciousness.

The children I teach are ahistorical; they have no sense of how the past

has predestined their own present, limiting their choices, shaping their values and lives.

The children I teach are cruel to each other; they lack compassion for misfortune, they laugh at weakness, they have contempt for people whose need for help shows too plainly.

The children I teach are uneasy with intimacy or candor. They cannot deal with genuine intimacy because of a lifelong habit of preserving a secret self inside an outer personality made up of artificial bits and pieces of behavior borrowed from television, or acquired to manipulate teachers. Because they are not who they represent themselves to be, the disguise wears thin in the presence of intimacy, so intimate relationships have to be avoided.

The children I teach are materialistic, following the lead of schoolteachers who materialistically “grade” everything – and television mentors who offer everything in the world for sale.

The children I teach are dependent, passive, and timid in the presence of new challenges. This timidity is frequently masked by surface bravado, or by anger or aggressiveness, but underneath is a vacuum without fortitude.

I could name a few other conditions that school reform will have to tackle if our national decline is to be arrested, but by now you will have grasped my thesis, whether you agree with it or not. Either schools, television, or both have caused these pathologies. It's a simple matter of arithmetic. Between schooling and television, all the time children have is eaten up. That's what has destroyed the American family; it no longer is a factor in the education of its own children.

What can be done?

First, we need a ferocious national debate that doesn't quit, day after day, year after year, the kind of continuous emphasis that journalism finds boring. We need to scream and argue about this school thing until it is fixed or broken beyond repair, one or the other. If we can fix it, fine; if we cannot, then the success of homeschooling shows a different road that has great promise. Pouring the money back into family education might kill two birds with one stone, repairing families as it repairs children.

Genuine reform is possible, but it shouldn't cost anything. We need to rethink the fundamental premises of schooling and decide what it is we want all children to learn, and why. For one hundred forty years this nation has tried to impose objectives from a lofty command center made up of “experts,” a central elite of social engineers. It hasn't worked. It won't work. It is a gross betrayal of the democratic promise that once made this

nation a noble experiment. The Russian attempt to control Eastern Europe has exploded before our eyes.

Our own attempt to impose the same sort of central orthodoxy, using the schools as an instrument, is also coming apart at the seams, albeit more slowly and painfully. It doesn't work because its fundamental premises are mechanical, anti-human, and hostile to family life. Lives can be controlled by machine education, but they will always fight back with weapons of social pathology – drugs, violence, self-destruction, indifference, and the symptoms I see in the children I teach.

It's high time we looked backward to regain an educational philosophy that works. One I like particularly well has been a favorite of the ruling classes of Europe for thousands of years. I think it works just as well for poor children as for rich ones. I use as much of it as I can manage in my own teachings; as much, that is, as I can get away with, given the present institution of compulsory schooling.

At the core of this elite system of education is the belief that self-knowledge is the only basis of true knowledge. Everywhere in this system, at every age, you will find arrangements that place the child alone in an unguided setting with a problem to solve. Sometimes the problem is fraught with great risks, such as the problem of galloping a horse or making it jump, but that, of course, is a problem successfully solved by thousands of elite children before the age of ten. Can you imagine anyone who had mastered such a challenge ever lacking confidence in his ability to do anything? Sometimes the problem is that of mastering solitude, as Thoreau did at Walden pond, or Einstein did in the Swiss customs house.

One of my former students, Roland Legiardi-Laura, though both his parents were dead and he had no inheritance, took a bicycle across the United States alone when he was hardly out of boyhood. Is it any wonder that in manhood he made a film about Nicaragua, although he had no money and no prior experience with film-making, and that it was an international award winner – even though his regular work was as a carpenter?

Right now we are taking from our children the time they need to develop self-knowledge. That has to stop. We have to invent school experiences that give a lot of that time back. We need to trust children from a very early age with independent study, perhaps arranged in school, but which takes place away from the institutional setting. We need to invent a curriculum where each kid has a chance to develop uniqueness and self-reliance....

We've got to give kids independent time right away because that is the

key to self-knowledge, and we must re-involve them with the real world as fast as possible so that the independent time can be spent on something other than more abstractions. This is an emergency. It requires drastic action to correct. Our children are dying like flies in our schools. Good schooling or bad schooling, it's all the same – irrelevant. ...

Independent study, community service, adventures in experience, large doses of privacy and solitude, a thousand different apprenticeships – these are all powerful, cheap, and effective ways to start a real reform of schooling. But no large-scale reform is ever going to repair our damaged children and our damaged society until we force the idea of “school” open to include family as the main engine of education. ...

Family is the main engine of education. If we use schooling to break children away from parents – and make no mistake, that has been the central function of schools since John Cotton announced it as the purpose of the Bay Colony schools in 1650 and Horace Mann announced it as the purpose of Massachusetts schools in 1850 – we're going to continue to have the horror show we have right now.

The curriculum of family is at the heart of any good life. We've gotten away from that curriculum – it's time we return to it. The way to sanity in education is for our schools to take the lead in releasing the stranglehold of institutions on family life, to promote during school time confluences of parent and child that will strengthen family bonds. ...

I have many ideas to make a family curriculum, and my guess is that a lot of you will have many ideas, too, once you begin to think about it. Our greatest problem in getting the kind of grassroots thinking going that could reform schooling is that we have large, vested interests profiting from schooling just exactly as it is, despite rhetoric to the contrary.

We have to demand that new voices and new ideas get a hearing, my ideas and yours. We've all had a bellyful of authorized voices on television and in the press. A decade-long, free-for-all debate is called for now, not any more “expert” opinions. Experts in education have never been right; their “solutions” are expensive, self-serving, and always involve further centralization. Enough.

Time for a return to democracy, individuality, and family. I've said my piece. Thank you.

[Editor's Note: Although there are parts of this article with which I disagree (particularly Gatto's belief that public education might be reformed rather than replaced with voluntaryist options), I chose to reprint it for several reasons. First, it is an interesting follow-up to my article on voluntaryism and educational statism in Whole No. 48 of *The Voluntaryist*.

Gatto's insight that the family is "the main engine of education" ties in neatly with the theme of the lead article in this issue – namely the importance of family and community to voluntaryism. If State power disappears, it will only be because it is replaced with the social power of family and community. Without individuals who learn self-control and self-responsibility – both of which are predominantly learned in the context of the family – a voluntaryist society will never arise. Without self-disciplined individuals, there will always be a clamor for some politician to lead us to the "promised land." Second, Gatto's indictment of the public school, as operating from a central command center made up of social engineers, and government bureaucrats, coincides with Milton Friedman's description of public schooling as the second "largest social enterprise in the United States," next "only to national defense." It has failed for the same reasons that collectivism will always fail. It is inefficient because it is not market-oriented, and it is immoral because it rests on the coercion of compulsory attendance laws and taxation (neither of which Gatto seems to oppose on principle). Third, his realization that public education is basically authoritarian and doesn't teach "anything except how to obey orders" just reinforces the point made repeatedly in George Smith's newly published essay, "For Reasons of State: Public Education in America." "[S]tate education exists primarily to serve the goals of the state, rather than the goals of the child." As he adds, "If the schools are intended as a boon to children and parents, if they are a great social service, then why must attendance be compulsory?"

While on the subject of schooling, I would like to make one correction to a statement I made in my earlier education article. On page 1 of *Whole No. 48*, I wrote that "as late as 1900, only 10% of American children attended public school." As far as I can determine at this time, the figure is just over 70% rather than 10%.

For a biting critique of public education and state schooling, contact The Gentle Wind School, Box 184, Surrey, Maine 04684. Ask for Volume I of *Rebound* (send \$ 2 or more as a donation). They believe that "Modern education is so malignant that it is no less than a cancer to American society."]

(The Voluntaryist, No. 53, pp. 5-8, December 1991)

Bad or Worse!

By Carl Watner

This article has been prompted by my reading of two new books about education. The contrast between statism (compulsory attendance laws, tax-funded public schools, etc.) and voluntaryism (private and homeschools) has been a recent theme in *The Voluntaryist* (see Whole Nos. 48 and 53). The connection between the title of this article and these books is the fact that all advocates of public schooling and nearly all those who support private or homeschooling believe in the *need* for the “right” laws to regulate education. Few believe that voluntary education needs no laws, and even fewer believe that there can be no such thing as a “good” law. *The Voluntaryist* stands with the latter few who assert that laws can never be “good,” but must necessarily be “bad” or “worse.”

The first book, John Gatto’s *Dumbing Us Down*, deserves attention because of the author’s background and conclusions. Despite the fact that John Gatto taught for twenty-six years in the public school system of New York City, and earned two university degrees, he quit his “factory school” job in order to speak out against statist indoctrination and compulsion. Both in 1989 and 1990, Mr. Gatto was New York City Teacher of the Year. Following these honors was Mr. Gatto’s selection as New York State Teacher of the Year in 1991. Both his acceptance speeches for the two most recent awards are found in *Dumbing Us Down*. The first, “The Psychopathic School,” was reprinted in Whole No. 53 of *The Voluntaryist* (December 1991) as “Why Schools Don’t Educate.” The second is titled “The Seven-Lesson School Teacher.” Following his resignation, Mr. Gatto was instrumental in organizing and financing an evening program on “The Exhausted School” given at New York City’s Carnegie Hall on November 13, 1991. One commentator summed up the evening’s theme by referring to a quote from a comic strip created by two of Gatto’s students: “I’m glad they don’t have schools to teach you to walk and talk...cause then we’d all be crawling around speechless.”

As Ivan Illich (another critic of compulsory schooling) has pointed out, coercive public schools are like daytime concentration camps which “confuse teaching with learning,” grade advancement with real education, and “a diploma with competence.” Most learning, Illich says, is not the result of formal instruction, but rather the result of unhampered participation in a meaningful situation. John Gatto would certainly agree

because he believes that “schools fly in the face of how children learn.” In describing how the modern State school system and the modern TV media serve as replacements for the home and workplace (where learning occurs most naturally), Gatto explains how public schools have become a major cause of weak families and weak communities. “They separate parents and children from vital interaction and from true curiosity about each other’s lives.” His conclusion, as an insider, that “government monopoly schools are structurally unreformable,” certainly reinforces my own position that this institution is one of the most insidious and totalitarian systems in our country.

In every state of the union, homeschooling parents have had brushes with the law because their choice to opt out of the public educational system is a challenge to state domination. State Social Service workers, backed by the police, have broken into private homes, kidnapped homeschool students, and in one instance murdered their father for resisting arrest. From the days of Plato forward, philosophers and politicians have realized that individuals living in strong family units are nearly impossible to regiment because they value their independence and individuality, and place a loving premium on instilling those values in other family members.

Until the family unit is destroyed all over America, the centralized State cannot assume full control over us. Parents who instruct their own children are more likely to teach them loyalty to themselves and to family values rather than loyalty to the State. An interesting counter-example of this was described in a *Wall Street Journal* article (April 20, 1992, p. A1) about DARE, the Drug Abuse Resistance Education program, being taught in public schools in 4700 communities nationwide. After attending a drug education class, an 11-year old student in Searsport, Maine informed the police that her parents were growing and smoking marijuana. Following up the tip, the police searched the family’s home and arrested both parents for drug possession. Displaying remorse, the father stated he could not blame his daughter: “She told the truth when asked questions by [the] authorities. That’s what I’ve always told her to do.” Here is a perfect illustration of how State education is a form of social control which practically ensures its own continued existence. It brainwashes the parents, and then brainwashes their children. It legitimizes its own activities and purposes in their minds. It falsely labels all other alternatives as ‘utopian,’ ‘anarchic,’ or ‘chaotic,’ and if it cannot outlaw challenges to its own existence, it strictly proscribes and/or regulates them.

John Gatto deserves recognition for perceiving the conflict between state education and the family. He calls for a return to “the family as the main engine of education,” for a totally free market in education, the end to teacher certification, and the end to compulsory attendance laws. Will there be some mistakes made in a free market system, he asks?

There will be plenty of mistakes made! The only thing I can say in defense of advocating a free market is that the system we have now guarantees that everybody will be a mistake. It guarantees a world that none of us want to live in. We have 200 years of earlier American history to study and to see that the free market worked sensationally well.

Quite coincidentally, the author of the second book to be mentioned here, comes to a similar conclusion. Karl Reed who wrote and published *The Bible, Homeschooling, and the Law*, writes that “Freedom has its risks;” but the alternatives to freedom are always totally unacceptable. He continues:

Better to live in freedom under the risk of “poor education” than to live in slavery under the state-approved alleged good education. Far better that our children be free to pursue knowledge unfettered than to be compelled to be in a place where only approved “knowledge” is allowed.

Both authors see that we are moving in the direction of more and more State control and less and less parental control over children. Given the political and philosophical orientation of most modern parents and voters, the failure of the public school system only increases the demand for more government. The public school promotes life-styles which can only result in family failure, and the more the family fails, the more professional and “expert” justification there is for the public school to assume additional authority over children. Most Americans living today are the end result of several generations of American public schools. Like the parents in Searsport, Maine they have “been conditioned to accept a statist world view,” and the rightness of everything their government does.

This leads us back to the main theme of this article. As a devout Christian, Reed believes that political laws have certain limits. “There are certain things that a law cannot do. Success cannot be assured by a law. Failure cannot be eliminated by a law. Intelligence cannot be created nor enforced by a law.” In other words, we are bound to reality by natural laws which the legislature cannot alter. Yet, the whole problem with Reed’s outlook is that he infers political laws can have limits, that there is some

legitimate role for Caesar and Caesar's government. He believes that there is a need for "good law" to ensure that homeschool parents and children are left alone. He suggests that "a good homeschool law might [take] the form of a constitutional amendment stating"

"The right of parents and guardians to educate their children shall not be abridged."

But like the First Amendment, after which it is fashioned, Reed's "good" law is not likely to be respected by any coercive government. The very fact of paying tribute to "Caesar" in the form of taxes, must ultimately impact on the right and the ability of parents to school their children as they please. Parents must pay their taxes before they spend money to educate their children. Whatever the amount of tax they pay, it is that much less available to spend on education or any other purpose of their choosing.

Looking further at the Bill of Rights, I believe it is foolish to think that coercive governments will ever respect individual rights. Consider the concluding words of the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

No person shall...be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use without just compensation.

The very wording of the Fifth Amendment implies that people may be justly deprived of life, liberty, and property. Such deprivations shall be legal so long as they are countenanced by "due process of law." The Amendment also implies that private property may be taken for public use, so long as compensation is given. But what kind of respect for rights is this? Rights are either inviolable, without any sort of legal exceptions, or they are not rights. And consider that the qualifications and exceptions ("due process of law" and "just compensation") are to be determined by the very same institution that is violating those rights. Who is to guard the guardians against abuse?

Homeschoolers who assert that they have a constitutional right to teach their children are mistaken. Whatever the legislature or majorities grant, they may revoke. There is never any security in constitutions or political documents. Contrary to the belief of many homeschooling parents, their children are creatures of the State from the time the parents receive a State birth certificate and apply for their children's Social Security number. The Supreme Court decisions which they rely upon to assert the right to homeschool provide few assurances. Many homeschoolers refer to *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (268 US 510, 45 S.Ct.

571) decided in 1925, because it sanctioned non-state educational alternatives. The State of Oregon (represented by Governor Pierce) had passed a law which effectively outlawed private schools. Although the statute was declared unconstitutional, embedded in the Supreme Court decision is the following dicta:

No question is raised concerning the power of the state reasonably to regulate all schools, to inspect, supervise, and examine them, their teachers and pupils; to require that all children of proper age attend some school, that teachers shall be of good moral character and patriotic disposition, that certain studies plainly essential to good citizenship must be taught, and that nothing be taught which is manifestly inimical to the public welfare. ...As often heretofore pointed out, rights guaranteed by the Constitution may not be abridged by legislation which has no reasonable relation to some purpose within the competency of the state.

So there you have it: the state may regulate all schools (including homeschools) and rights “guaranteed” by the Constitution may be abridged so long as there is some reason in the state’s agenda. (Who has ever known the state to be without some “reasonable” justification for its intervention?) Historically, the state’s interest in education has been two-fold: civic and economic. The states require citizens who can read and write, and vote and participate in its political system, but who cannot see the invisible chains woven about them. The states also require that “children will be able to eventually provide for themselves so that they will not become a burden on the state’s welfare rolls.” (There must be producers, after all, to support the parasitical class.) As the Supreme Court said in *Pierce*, “the child is not the *mere* creature of the State, (emphasis added)” implying that while the child belongs to the State, its parents and guardians still retain some say in how it is raised.

Bob LeFevre used to speak of two kinds of government: bad and worse: no government could ever be categorized as good or better. The idea of good government, he thought, was as ridiculous as imagining an honest burglar. Nor, he affirmed, could there be any such thing as “limited” government. In his mind, “unlimited” government was a redundancy, and “limited” government was a contradiction. Our system of government “is so bad that as you [try to] improve it, it gets worse.” All (political) laws are bad so long as they emanate from the State, and, of course, they would not be laws if they did not issue from the legislature. Laws, like limited government, as LeFevre inferred, are either bad or

worse. No political laws are ever good or even necessary. As the ancient Roman Stoics explained: “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 anyway, they did not need a government.” In either case, there is no justification for government or political laws.

Endnotes

John Gatto, *Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling*, 1992. Available from New Society Publishers, Box 189, Gabriola Island, BC VOR IXO, Canada.

Karl Reed, *The Bible, Homeschooling, and the Law*, 1991. Available from Christian Home Ministries, Box 100, Mammoth Springs AR 72554.

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 58, pp. 2-3, October 1992)

Nutrition Is Too Important To Be Left to the Free Market

By Dan Endsley

The year is 2092, and finally, public grocery shopping is available to all who need it. For years, reactionary and cantankerous anti-social elements had argued that the free marketplace was adequate to provide all the groceries that people need. But the continued popularity of unnutritious “junk food,” fad diets, home growing, and even, in some cases, outright fasting, finally convinced people that grocery shopping was too important to be left to private enterprise – any more than, say, delivery of the mail, the nation’s defense, or the education of the nation’s youth could be left to the marketplace.

Shopping at grocery stores owned and operated by the government is now mandatory for people 16 or older, and is optional for children and youths. Suburban and rural shoppers are required to shop at a selected store near their homes, while most intercity shoppers must ride buses across town to insure equal access to all grocery products. Government stores are open only on weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Shoppers are categorized by age and required to shop in groups of 25 to 50 people. Each group is assigned to a state-licensed and certified grocer. This person shepherds them up and down the aisles, telling them which foods are desirable and which aren’t. Shoppers are required to spend a certain amount of time in each department; say, 15 minutes in the deli, 25 in the grocery, 10 in the bakery, 5 in the video section. Dawdling in one section for too long is not permitted, nor are shoppers allowed to skip sections that aren’t suited to their taste, even if they have no taste for, say, cottage cheese or pork rinds.

Shoppers are rewarded on how well they shop – or, more precisely, on how well they follow the instructions of their particular grocer. In some cases their performance is measured by tests, in others by the evaluation of the grocer to whom they are assigned, and very often by a combination of those two methods.

Those with the highest test scores are labeled “honor shoppers” and given bumper stickers to place on the rears of their cars. Those who score lowest are labeled “at risk shoppers,” or “shopping disabled,” and forced to shop in special, remedial stores, or in the regular stores but at special hours, with specially-trained cashiers, baggers, etc. The grocers and store

managers are elated to identify “shopping disabled” people. They receive additional state funding to treat this affliction. “Smart shoppers,” who at times know their way around the grocery store better than the certified grocers, pose more of a challenge to them, and are blamed for fostering elitist attitudes of “shopping meritocracy” and lowering the self-esteem of less gifted shoppers.

Stores are closed during June, July, and August, except as necessary to accommodate those shoppers who failed to shop adequately during the other nine months. The government, at the urging of the grocers, store managers, bus drivers, and others in the shopping system, discourages and restricts the growing of food at home. These special-interest groups argue that only mass-produced, store-bought foods are healthy and beneficial. In most states, the “grow-at-home” movement has been restricted by laws that require “home-growers” to be fully certified grocers, but in a few states a modest level of home-growing is tolerated.

Some shoppers prefer to shop at private stores. These stores, in many cases operated by churches, are widely acknowledged to offer more variety, higher quality and lower prices than government stores, despite extensive regulations requiring them to offer goods and services nearly identical to those offered by government stores. However, those who prefer to patronize private or church stores must pay the government grocery stores just as if they were buying all their groceries there, so relatively few can afford to shop at such establishments. The grocers at the public grocery stores often resent the private shoppers for not shopping at the public stores, although a high percentage of grocers send their own children to shop at private stores. This practice is strongly discouraged by the local grocery boards.

These boards, which are elected at regular intervals, hire the managers of the stores, oversee their budgets, and set the prices that all who live in the area must pay at the government stores. In most states, the local grocery boards are overseen by the State Department of Groceries. Because the system of public grocery stores is so expensive to run, in recent years an increasing share of funding has come from federal aid to groceries. At first, political conservatives opposed federal aid to grocery stores, arguing that it diminished local and state control of eating. However, with the election of a conservative President in 2080 and his appointment of a “grocery czar” the following year, they came to appreciate the value of encouraging proper nutrition on a nationwide basis, especially in areas where conservatives are out of power.

All government stores carry virtually the same products, though there has in recent years been a trend toward “mandatory grocery diversification,” requiring stores to offer oriental food, soul food, and Mexican food. This came about after a presidential commission examined the problem of grocery store dropouts – young people from cultural minorities who quit shopping, complaining that the government-mandated groceries were insensitive to their culinary needs. But attempts to lure them back – ranging from public service advertisements, to sermons from authorities, to the enactment of mandatory shopping laws and the hiring of special police officers to arrest truants, and special counselors to convince them to stick with the government mandated foods – failed.

A more “liberal” element has argued for a requirement that all Americans purchase a mandated variety of different ethnic foods, in the interest of what came to be known as “multicuisinism.” Conservatives reminisced about the good old days, when grocery stores were clean, polite, and quiet places to shop, a time when shoppers appreciated the privileges of shopping. They declared, “if white bread was good enough for our parents and grandparents, it’s good enough for everyone.” Known as “white-breaders,” this group managed to take over some local grocery boards and the departments of education in a few states.

In recent years, there has been a well-financed campaign in favor of “choice in shopping,” a system in which shoppers would receive “grocery vouchers,” which could be spent at any public grocery store or at any of a handful of government-licensed “private” stores. The administrators and employees of the government stores argue that enactment of this policy would mark the end of grocery shopping for all but the rich, a vast increase in poor eating habits, and untold misery. Those who advocate the idea of vouchers were accused of being in the pay of private grocers. So far, advocates of government stores have prevailed with the argument that nutrition is too important to be left to the vulgar allures of the loudest hawker.

The public shopping system isn’t working perfectly, but it is certainly better than the old days, when people shopped wherever and whenever they wanted. And experts in Washington have announced a shopping reform that will remedy many of the problems with the current public grocery system. “Shopping 2100” is designed to make our shoppers the best in the world. After “Shopping 2100” is implemented, nationally recognized authorities on groceries will design the grocery stores of the future and provide for national shopping tests so that each state will know where its shoppers rank. Top-performing states will be given more money

as a reward. The lowest-performing states will be more closely regulated to help them become top states. This program will be carried out until every state's shoppers are designated "above average." At that stage, according to the program's backers, the nation's public grocery system will have achieved total dominance over "the commanding heights of the food chain."

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(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 64, p. 4. October 1993)

Silent Weapons For Silent War

The following excerpts are taken from an allegedly top secret government document written in 1979. They were published in William Cooper's *Behold A Pale Horse* (Sedona: Light Technology Publishing, 1991, pp. 39-40, 56-58).

Education: A Tool of the Ruling Class

In order to achieve a totally predictable economy, the low class elements of the society must be brought under total control, i.e., must be housebroken, trained, and assigned a yoke and long-term social duties from a very early age, before they have an opportunity to question the propriety of the matter. In order to achieve such conformity, the lower-class family unit must be disintegrated by a process of increasing preoccupation of the parents and the establishment of government-operated day-care centers for the occupationally orphaned children.

The quality of education given to the lower class must be of the poorest sort, so that the moat of ignorance isolating the inferior class from the superior class is and remains incomprehensible to the inferior class. With such an initial handicap, even bright lower class individuals have little if any hope of extricating themselves from their assigned lot in life. This form of slavery is essential to maintaining some measure of social order, peace, and tranquility for the ruling upper class. ...

Diversion, The Primary Strategy

Experience has proven that the SIMPLEST METHOD of securing a silent weapon and gaining control of the public is to KEEP THE PUBLIC UNDISCIPLINED AND IGNORANT of basic ... principles on the one hand, WHILE KEEPING THEM CONFUSED, DISORGANIZED, AND DISTRACTED with matters of no real importance on the other hand. This is achieved by:

(1) disengaging their minds; sabotaging their mental activities; providing a low quality program of public education in mathematics, logic, ... and economics; and discouraging technical creativity.

(2) engaging their emotions, increasing their self-indulgence and their indulgence in emotional and physical activities, by:

(a) unrelenting emotional affrontations and attacks (mental and emotional rape) by way of a constant barrage of sex, violence, and wars in the media – especially the T.V. and the newspapers.

(b) giving them what they desire – in excess – “junk food for thought” – and depriving them of what they really need.

(c) REWRITING HISTORY and LAW and SUBJECTING THE PUBLIC TO THE DEVIANT CREATION, thus being able to SHIFT THEIR THINKING from personal needs to highly fabricated outside priorities.

These preclude their interest in and discovery of the silent weapons of social automation technology

The general rule is that there is profit in confusion; the more confusion, the more profit. Therefore, the best approach is to create problems and then offer the solutions.

Diversion Summary

Media: Keep the adult public attention diverted away from the real social issues, and captivated by matters of no real importance.

Schools: Keep the young public ignorant of real mathematics, real economics, real law, and REAL HISTORY.

Entertainment: Keep the public entertainment below a sixth-grade level.

Work: Keep the public busy, busy, with no time to think; back on the farm with the other animals.

Consent, The Primary Victory

A silent weapon system operates upon data obtained from a docile public by legal (but not always lawful) force. Much information is made available to silent weapon systems programmers through the Internal Revenue Service. ...

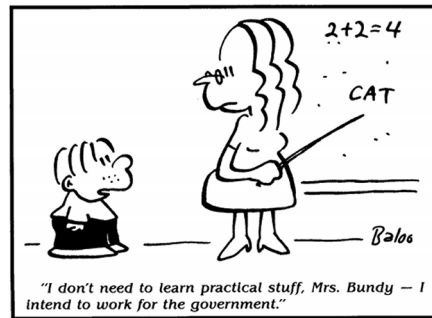
Furthermore, the number of such forms submitted to the I.R.S. is a useful indicator of public consent, an important factor in strategic decision making....

Consent Coefficients – numerical feedback indicating victory status. Psychological basis: When the government is able to collect tax and seize private property without just compensation, it is an indication that the public is ripe for surrender and is consenting to enslavement and legal encroachment. A good and easily quantified indicator of harvest time is the number of public citizens who pay income tax despite an obvious lack of reciprocal or honest service from the government.

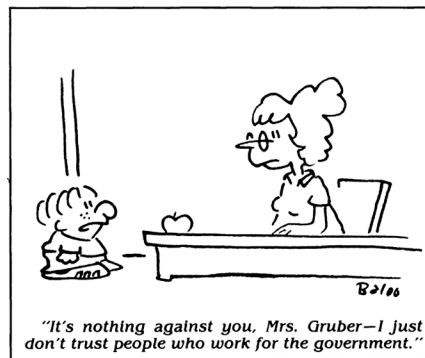
(The Voluntaryist, No. 77, p. 2, December 1995)

Baloo Cartoons

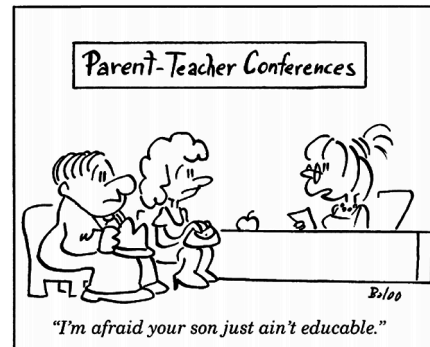
The artist's URL is www.baloocartoons.com



(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 48, p. 4, February 1991.)



(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 58, p. 3, October 1992.)



(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 105, p. 7, August 2000.)

Is Public Education Necessary?

By Samuel L. Blumenfeld

The answer is obvious: it was not needed then, and it is certainly not needed today. Schools are necessary, but they can be created by free enterprise today as they were before the public school movement achieved its fraudulent state monopoly in education. Subject education to the same competitive market forces that other goods and services are subjected to, and we shall see far better education at much lower overall cost. Instead of a “crusade against ignorance” to reform the world, we shall have schools capable of performing the limited and practical functions that schools were originally created to perform.

The failure of public education is the failure of statism as a political philosophy. It has been tried. It has been found sorely wanting. Having learned from our mistakes, would it not be better to return to the basic principles upon which this nation was founded? Education was not seen then as the cure-all for mankind’s moral diseases. But it was on that premise that the reformers built the present system. They were wrong. The system cannot work because in a free society government has no more place in education than it has in religion. Once Americans grasp the full significance of this idea, they will understand why the return of educational freedom is essential to the preservation and expansion of American freedom in general.

Samuel L. Blumenfeld, *Old Greenwich: The Devin-Adair Company*, 1981, p. 249.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 103, p. 4, April 2000)

Discovering America As It Is

A review of the book by Carl Watner

Discovery 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 straightforward, 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)

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 105, p. 2, August 2000)

An Open Letter to Kerry Morgan, Author of *Real Choice, Real Freedom in American Education*

December 10, 1999

Dear Kerry,

Earlier this year, after I had read your new book about school choice, I wrote you several letters and sent you copies of my newsletter *The Voluntaryist*. I just finished reading your book for the second time, and would like to briefly outline your argument for my readers, and then query you about their consistency. I agree with your main starting points: full respect for parental rights and intellectual freedom are the essentials to establishing a free market in education. However I do not understand why you stop short of applying the same logic to a free market in defense and protection services. If taxation and the use of or threat of coercion for educational purposes violates the rights of parents and their intellectual freedom, why don't these same prohibited means (taxation and compulsion) violate individual rights when used by the government to provide other services?

The first part of your book is devoted to elaborating the "First Principles of Choice and Education." At the beginning of Part II, you summarize these "foundational principles." Your argument is premised on the fact (which is recognized by the American Declaration of Independence) "that all human beings are 'endowed by their creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness'." (12) In other words, God or nature "gives every human being certain absolute rights and civil government must respect and protect those particular rights absolutely." (14) Therefore, parents, as the natural progenitors of their children, are endowed "with the unalienable right to direct the education and upbringing of their children free from governmental interference, regulation, or control." (141) Furthermore, every person, whether or not a parent, has "the right to intellectual liberty," which you define as "freedom from governmental compulsion or coercion in things of the mind." (141) From the natural law principle of right to life, liberty, and property you conclude that

“Parents are not to be interfered with by the civil government in the exercise of their unalienable right to direct the education of their children;

“The civil government may not forcibly expose a child to any state-approved curriculum or idea, or certify or license teachers or parents, or compel attendance; and

“The civil government is barred from levying a tax of any type on the people or their property, in order to fund any government established school or provide education-related grants to any government-established or private institution.” (141)

Essentially, you argue that we should have a totally free market in education: a market without taxes, teacher licensing, or compulsory attendance laws. “The legal basis for a teacher’s authority to educate is and must be derived immediately from the child’s parent by free consent.” (232) The teacher is an agent of the parent and “has no primary or original right to teach children who are not his or her own,” and is bound to teach what the parents direct, not what they (the teachers) think best for the children. (242) Furthermore, as you point out, all parents, not just religious ones, have the right to direct the education of their children. The First Amendment claim – made by the Amish and other Christian homeschoolers – destroys the universality of parental rights by regarding these “rights as valid only when a parent can qualify [to teach their children] on religious grounds.” (121) “Parents who do not believe in God enjoy parental authority in equal measure with those who worship God. Neither does parental authority, including the authority to educate their children, spring from parental knowledge, possession of an academic degree, or any other state educational qualification.... The right of a parent to educate springs neither from their religious beliefs nor from their degree of learning, but rather from their natural status as a parent.” (42)

Murray Rothbard, in his monograph – *Education, Free and Compulsory* – states that the key issue in education is “[S]hall the parent or the state be the overseer of the child? ... [U]nder whose guidance ... should the child be placed – his parents or the state?” (pp.9-10 of Rothbard) In fact, at one point in your text you come very close to describing the same issue. In discussing “What Is Intellectual Freedom?” in Chapter 7, you write that “the question of more immediate importance for this book and Chapter is not *what* mental seed should be sown, but *who* has the legal right, power, and authority to decide?” (90) It is clear from everything that you have written in *Real Choice, Real Freedom* that your answer is: the parents.

You have outlined a powerful argument in defense of the free market,

one that has been used by many thinkers in the past. In your book, you review Thomas Jefferson's arguments for establishing religious freedom and disestablishing the state of Virginia's control over the church. You quote him as declaring that "to compel a man to furnish contributions of money for the propagation of opinions which he disbelieves, is sinful and tyrannical," and "that even forcing him to support this or that teacher ... is depriving him of that comfortable liberty of giving his own contributions ..." to the teacher or pastor of his choice. (107) You then point out that "Jefferson didn't apply his own professed principles against coercive financing to education ..." and specifically identify these principles as the principles of intellectual freedom and freedom from coercive subsidy. Jefferson's failing was that while he applied these principles to the religious sphere by supporting disestablishment he simultaneously supported state taxation to support education.

I fear that you fail the same consistency test that you apply to Jefferson. You should take the principle of freedom from coercive subsidy one step further. Apply it to the institution of government. Why is coercive financing (taxation) of any state activity justified? Why is taxation for education to be prohibited, yet taxation for roads, courts, armies, and police to be permitted? For whatever reason, you recognize that compulsion in support of religion and education is morally wrong, but do not see that it is wrong to use compulsion to support other government activities.

The connection between intellectual freedom and freedom from coercive subsidy is the use of physical force (or its threat) to compel an action from a person who would not otherwise voluntarily act in the manner desired by the wielder of that force. This initiation of force violates your right to control your property and yourself. Taxation is theft because the government is taking your property from you without your consent. Forced attendance at school is forcing you to send your children to school against your wishes. Compulsory certification of teachers keeps you from teaching if you wish to be a teacher. A compulsory curriculum forces you to teach things that you wouldn't choose to teach. The initiation of coercion is the constant element in these examples. I believe that a person should be totally free of coercive molestation from both individual criminals and from the government.

It is impossible in the nature of things for government to abandon its initiation of coercion. The two essential elements of government are that "it presumes to establish a compulsory monopoly of defense (police, court, law) services over some geographical area." Individual property owners who prefer not to subscribe to any defense agency are forced to allow the

government to act on their behalf; individuals who wish to subscribe to another defense company within that area are not allowed to do so; nor are voluntary associations permitted to organize to offer such defense services to those who would buy from them. Secondly, government obtains its revenues “by the aggression – the robbery – of taxation, a compulsory levy on the inhabitants of the geographical area.” In every area of its activity, government uses force to compel obedience or to prevent behavior that threatens its existence. The behavior of government and its agents is wrong because their action compels peaceful people to do things they ordinarily would not choose to do.

In the case of taxation, what the government spends the money on (religion, education, courts, army, police, welfare for the poor, etc.) is beside the point. The means are to be prohibited because they are coercive. You rightfully point out that, “Opposition to compulsion in religion is not opposition to religion. Opposition to compulsion [in] education is not opposition to education.” (111) To which I would add: Opposition to coercively funded roads, armies, courts, and police is not opposition to voluntarily provided roads, armies, courts, and police. To reiterate: the opposition is to the coercive manner in which they are provided.

Very early in your book you identify a key idea that, “The American system of state and federal government was instituted and organized in order to secure God-given rights.” (17) The Founding Fathers may have truly believed that they were organizing a government to secure individual rights. However, just because they sincerely believed it does not necessarily mean, that in the nature of things, governments can secure rights for us. I believe the Founders were mistaken. Believing or wishing for a thing does not make it so. Governments – because of their inherent reliance on coercion – cannot secure rights for all people by violating the rights of some of them who remain peaceful, yet who refuse to pay taxes or prefer no defensive service or who prefer to use a competitive service or who prefer to organize their own defensive service. Refusal to pay taxes in response to a government demand, or refusal to send one’s children to government school, is not, in my opinion, an act which “subverts the peace and order of the community.” (124) It is the government’s demand that I pay taxes or send my children to government school which destroys my equanimity and my right to a peaceful existence.

If you still believe that a person should pay his taxes and be disciplined or imprisoned by the government for his failure to do so, then I suggest you consider what you wrote on page 67 of your book. “The true sanction against parents who simply neglect their educational duty [to send

their children to school] is for their neighbors to privately confront them and then openly criticize them. Moral persuasion and public shame, not civil punishment, is the correct sanction.” The true sanction against people who free load or who refuse to pay what the government considers is their “fair share” is not to place them in jail, but rather “for their neighbors to privately confront them and then openly criticize them. Moral persuasion and public shame, not civil punishment, is the correct sanction.”

In your discussion of “The Unalienable Right of Intellectual Freedom” beginning on page 232 you point out, “No human law should coerce parents to send their children to be exposed to government approved ideas and opinions.” Whether these ideas are consistent with the beliefs of the parents or are contrary to the beliefs of the parents is beside the point. “But whether contrary or consistent, the coercive nature of the exposure breaches the liberty of the parents.... Statutes that compel government funding, erection and/or maintenance of a school building or financial support of teachers by taxation, are contrary to an individual’s right to support only those ideas which he or she believes. The issue is not that taxpayers may disbelieve the ideas they are taxed to support. The legal issue is that taxpayers are being compelled ... in the first instance.” (233) Shouldn’t this logic apply to the other services that government provides us, such as roads, the army, the police, the courts, etc.? If not, why not? Isn’t the issue the same in each case? Whether or not an individual uses the roads with his car or walks, the issue is the same. The compulsion in providing the service is wrong.

I highly recommend your book to readers of my newsletter - otherwise I would not be writing you this letter and planning to publish it in *The Voluntaryist*. I hope that you might choose to respond to my concern that you have stopped short of applying the logic of disestablishment to the government itself. However, if the arguments you offer in defense of parental rights and intellectual freedom are valid in the case of religion and education, then surely they are just as valid to the compulsions used by government to do all the things that it provides for us. If compulsion is wrong in religion and education, then surely it is wrong in government roads, government money, government courts, and in the very institution of government itself.

Sincerely,
Carl Watner

February 16, 2000

Dear Mr. Watner:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your thoughtful open letter of December 10th 1999. In considering the points you make and responding to them, I think it important to restate my argument in a nutshell first, and then address the points you make regarding them. If my response is too long, then edit as you will.

“The Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God”

First and foremost, it is critical to understand my *legal* foundation. The legal foundation for parental rights and intellectual freedom is described in Chapter 1, entitled “The Laws of Nature and of Nature’s God.” In that chapter I answer the fundamental question: “What law governs America?” I reply that the law which governs America is that law identified in the Declaration of Independence. The Declaration is *the* legal document in American law. It acknowledges that the American people are *one* people and entitled by the *law of nature and of nature’s God* to assume their rightful place as a nation among the nation of men. The Declaration then affirms several substantive dimensions of the law of nature such as legal equality before the law, unalienable rights of all persons, limited government by consent of the people, and the defensive right of lawful revolution after exhaustion of legal remedies. These dimensions touch upon both the subject of *rights* and *of power*.

It is only in first understanding the origin *and* substance of the law of nature and of nature’s God, that I am able to then identify and articulate a legal basis for the unalienable right of parents to direct the education and upbringing of their own children free from all state interference, regulation, and control. Moreover, the substance of this law also establishes a legal basis for the unalienable right of intellectual freedom.

We may not adequately understand or accurately discuss the rights of parents or of intellectual freedom unless we first determine if these *rights* are part of the law of nature and of nature’s God. So too, we may not adequately understand or accurately discuss, 1) the purpose of civil government, or 2) whether that purpose includes the power to tax, or 3) whether that purpose places any inherent legal limits on the exercise of the power to tax, unless we also determine if these *powers* are considered by the law of nature and of nature’s God.

If we begin to discuss parental rights, intellectual freedom or the civil government’s purpose or taxing power with any other foundation or no foundation at all, then we are not discussing the American system of rights and power which is explicitly grounded on the law of nature. We may discuss other systems grounded on other foundations, or whether the

American system is the best system, but to the extent our discussion is about rights and power in the United States then we must have free recourse to the foundation of the law which governs the United States. That law is the law of God as expressed in nature and confirmed in revelation with respect to its universality.

In summary on this foundational point, I do not think we can talk about unalienable rights, that is to say, those rights which are fixed, uniform and universal, binding over the earth at all times and under all circumstances, unless we *first* observe the preexisting fixed, uniform, and universal law laid down by the Creator in the law of nature. (Now the subject of God as the author of law would make for an interesting discussion, but not at this time. Suffice it to say that the substance of this law was articulated in the Declaration). So too, we cannot talk about the lawful purpose and scope of civil power including the tax power unless we also have recourse to the law of nature.

Applying the Law to Taxation for Government Roads, Courts, Armies, and Police

Now in examining your open letter I cannot say that your view of civil power and of taxation first looks to this law as its foundation. Rather than an explicit discussion of the law of nature as the foundation upon which I premised my argument for parental rights and intellectual freedom, I find that your open letter leaves this foundation unexplored. It appears that rather than first examining this foundation and making an argument to a specific application, you make arguments from application-to-application. In other words, you first consider the applications I make from the law of nature, *i.e.*, no taxation for education because it is contrary to parental rights and intellectual freedom, and then argue from this application to another application, *i.e.*, no taxation for government roads, courts, armies, and police.

Permit me to suggest that a more suitable analysis would first look to the law of nature and then ask whether from this foundation we can reason to a specific application such as no taxation for government roads, courts, armies and police. Thus, my first question (for every good reply must pose questions as well as answers), do you think that the law of nature and of nature's God has any legal substance upon which the question with respect to the lawfulness of taxation for government roads, courts, armies and police can be answered? In searching your article for an answer, I find that you believe the framers were mistaken in believing that government can secure rights for all people because the security of such rights must be

based on coercion. I sense that you may not also hold to other aspects of the law of nature, but who knows until you say? I certainly think there is a positive answer to my question and will flesh it out in a few minutes, but first let me give your particular points some additional attention.

Look to the Law of Nature for the Existence, Nature and Scope of Civil Power

You generally express full agreement with my main points: respect for parental rights and intellectual freedom. You articulate several of my points in support of parental rights and intellectual freedom and then examine my treatment of Thomas Jefferson. I chide Mr. Jefferson for failing to apply his espoused principles against intellectual coercion to education. You pick up on this criticism and suggest I too may have failed to apply those principles to government itself. You offer that I:

should take the principle of freedom from coercive subsidy one step further. Apply it to the institution of government. Why is coercive financing [taxation] of any state activity justified? Why is taxation for education to be prohibited, yet taxation for roads, courts, armies, and police to be permitted? For whatever reason, you recognize that compulsion in support of religion and education is morally wrong, but do not see that it is wrong to use compulsion to support other government activities.

Your question and comment above accurately articulates the critical issue which I must address. But permit me to phrase it as I see it- from the vantage point of the law of nature. Recall that my book first looked at the substance of the law of nature and of nature's God and then second, determined if that law granted the civil government any power over the realm of ideas. Following that same blueprint here, I submit that the critical question is whether or not the substance of the law of nature and of nature's God empowers any civil government to tax? This is to say, does the lawful exercise of civil power include the power to compel anything, and more specifically, does it include the power to compel the people to support civil government by a system of extracting money under threat of real punishment?

In answering this question I could turn to the Constitution and note those particular provisions which authorize civil government to lay taxes upon the people. See Article 1, sections 7, 8 and 9. But to do so would not establish whether or not the law of nature provided for taxation. These provisions may be helpful to understand the federal taxing power, but to use them as a basis to justify the *lawful existence* of a civil taxing power, would

be to argue from the application back to the foundation. What we need to do is to first examine the law of nature itself in attempting to determine whether or not its substance empowers any civil government to tax.

This examination ought to be of critical interest to libertarian readers since their exposure to the law of nature and of nature's God is probably only slightly different than the exposure of Democrats or Republicans. I do not intend to slight anyone in particular, but most libertarian publications which I have read, only make occasional reference to the Declaration of Independence and almost never articulate the substance of its legal foundation. Of course, neither Democrats nor Republicans ever get even that far.

Civil Government – a Tolerated Evil or Legitimate Authority?

In answering the question, I believe that the law of nature authorizes civil government to levy taxes and to take property for public use with compensation. The first constitutes a lawful form of taxation which is assessed on the people as a whole, the second is a lawful form of taxation which, because it falls on one person whose property is being taken for public use, is compensated by the government itself as to its value so as not to cause the tax to disproportionately fall on one person alone.

Now I say I believe this, but on what basis do I believe? In support of my belief that the law of nature authorizes civil governments to levy taxes (and leaving the question of compensated takings for public use to another day) I follow the evidentiary path I laid out in my book with respect to supporting my belief that the law of nature both 1) empowers parents to direct the education of their children free from state coercive subsidies, and 2) empowers persons to enjoy intellectual liberty free from coercive subsidies to support the propagation of ideas. To support those propositions, I looked at the way human beings are created according to nature. I also looked at the Bible to determine if any evidence in support thereof could be found. For the time being I will not address the Biblical proofs as I sense your readers might not regard that document as evidence.

But turning to the nature of human beings and how they are made and act, I see in this nature of things, that as James Madison has observed: "Men are not Angels." By nature, human beings do what they ought to do, and do what they ought not do. But irrespective of this infirmity, they are obliged by the law of nature to do what is right. So too, civil governments are composed of these men and women and likewise obligated to do what is right. It is right that a man should govern himself and it is his right to be free from the interference of his neighbor in so doing. It is also right that

civil officials secure to each man the liberty of such self-government. This liberty is not secured by usurpation or regulation, but by the prosecution and punishment of those persons who interfere with that liberty.

In the proper discharge of this power, the official is to be compensated. For this reason we pay taxes. By assenting to a form of government which authorized civil officials to exercise the power to secure our unalienable rights, we also assent to pay him for his work. We are paid for our work and when not paid we have recourse to the courts who will levy and attach our employer's assets if he declines to pay us.

Because civil officials are also human beings and share in that same compulsion to do wrong as those from whom they are elected, so too their conduct should be subject to the same laws as all others, and their power should be limited by the common consent of the people as a people (and not as individuals) as embodied in their legal documents which define the limits of civil power. If the people choose to not pay taxes by embodying same in their legal charters, then civil government has no right to say otherwise, but for all practical purposes there will either be no civil government or only a very wicked one.

Thus, I would submit to you as a matter of the law of nature, that civil government is not an inherently evil institution or a tolerated evil. Rather, civil government is a lawful institution which has a limited, but significant purpose of restraining and punishing evil *actions*. Its purpose is limited to the restraint and punishment of acts, not ideas. So too, it is entitled to collect revenue for the purpose of paying those to execute those limited functions. ...

Summary

In summary, there is a lawful purpose for civil government under the law of nature. I do not think we both share that premise. There is also authority to tax commercial transactions under the law of nature in order to fulfill that limited purpose. But nothing which is to be found among the purpose of civil government includes the purpose of taxing the people on their liberty of existence, or the possession of their property either real or personal, through a system of taxation. Nor ought taxes lawfully collected be spent on purposes beyond the scope of civil authority under the law of nature.

Sincerely yours,
Kerry L. Morgan

March 9, 2000

Dear Kerry,

Thank you for answering my “Open Letter.” Let me summarize your response:

1. The Declaration of Independence is the fundamental law of the United States. It affirms the law of nature, which holds to (among other things): a) equality before the law; b) unalienable rights of all persons; c) limited government by the consent of the people.

2. The law of nature must be examined in order to determine whether or not it empowers any civil government to tax. This is the critical question.

3. Look at the way human beings are created according to nature. Men are not angels. They sometimes invade the rights of others. It is right that government officials punish those persons who interfere with the liberty of others.

4. Government officials must be compensated. “For this reason we pay our taxes.” If we assent to government protection, we assent to paying those who work for the government.

5. Civil government is entitled to collect revenue for the purpose of executing its legitimate functions. Therefore, the law of nature authorizes civil government to levy taxes.

A most succinct discussion of these points is to be found in the Appendix, titled “Taxation,” in Lysander Spooner’s book, *An Essay on the Trial by Jury*, which was originally published in 1852. Spooner states that “It was a principle of the Common Law, as it is of the law of nature, and of common sense, that no man can be taxed without his personal consent.” He writes:

All legitimate government is a mutual insurance company, voluntarily agreed upon by the parties to it, for the protection of their rights against wrong-doers. In its voluntary character it is precisely similar to an association for mutual protection against fire or shipwreck. Before a man will join an association for these latter purposes, and pay the premium for being insured, he will, if he be a man of sense, look at the articles of association; see what the company promises to do; what it is likely to do; and what are the rates of insurance. If he be satisfied on all these points, he will become a member, pay his premium for a year, and then hold the company to its contract. If the conduct of the company prove unsatisfactory, he will let his policy expire at the end of the year for which he has paid; will decline to pay any further premiums, and either seek insurance elsewhere, or take his own risk without

any insurance. And as men act in the insurance of their ships and dwellings, they would act in the insurance of their properties, liberties and lives, in the political association, or government.

The political insurance company, or government, have no more right, in nature or reason, to assume a man's consent to be protected by them, and to be taxed for that protection, when he has given no actual consent, than a fire or marine insurance company have to assume a man's consent to be protected by them, and to pay the premium when his actual consent has never been given. To take a man's property without his consent is robbery; and to assume his consent, where no actual consent is given, makes the taking none the less robbery. If it did, the highwayman has the same right to assume a man's consent to part with his purse, that any man or any other body of men, can have. And his assumption would afford as much moral justification for his robbery as does a like assumption, on the part of the government, for taking a man's property without his consent. The government's pretence of protecting him, as an equivalent for the taxation, affords no justification. It is for himself to decide whether he desires such protection as the government offers him. If he do not desire it, or do not bargain for it, the government has no more right than any other insurance company to impose it upon him, or make him pay for it. [p. 223]

It seems to me that Spooner's reasoning rests on the fundamentals of the law of nature. Government by consent must mean consent of the individual; otherwise – as has happened here in America – a majority of the individuals participating in the government may band together and deprive the individual of his property. And the fact that they have to use coercion and threats to obtain that property proves that the individual does not consent to their levies.

I agree that men are not angels. Protection of their rights is a service that they must pay for if they choose to employ others to protect them. But there is nothing in the law of nature that says men must be compelled to use only one agency (the government) for that service; or that the government is empowered to use force to collect for its services when a person has not consented to the use of its services. In fact, it seems to me that the only way to keep government honest is to have competitors. And since men are not angels, how do we keep the non-angelic from taking over the reins of government and using it to their advantage to plunder the rest of us?

In my letter, I wrote that “Taxation is theft because the government is taking your property from you without your consent.” If you believe that government must rest on consent, then how can you claim that the law of nature empowers government to use coercion to collect taxes? Who would consent to a government that was empowered to use coercion (against themselves) as a general method of collecting its revenues? To take an example from early American history: the farmers engaged in the Whiskey Rebellion certainly didn’t consent to the federal revenue laws they were protesting. To be consistent, it seems to me that you should argue that the only time the government might be entitled to use coercion to collect its taxes is when a person contracted with it for its services, actually used its services, and then refused to pay. What evidence did the federal government have that these farmers ever consented or contracted for its protection services?

There is no perfect utopia. I am sure that problems will arise even in a competitive system based upon personal consent. However, I do believe that a system predicated upon personal consent and contract will have fewer problems, will work more practically and morally, than a system which embraces a coercive monopoly and physical force as its base.

In closing, I ask: What productive, reasonable, and responsible person would consent to such a government as we have now? And if they would not, why would they have consented to the government created by the American founders in 1789? The Constitution either empowered such a government as we have today; or else it failed to prevent the emergence of such a government as we have today. In either case, it must be condemned for relying on coercion to maintain itself.

In closing, let me again thank you for writing such a thought-provoking book and taking the time to read and think about the questions I have raised.

Sincerely,
Carl Watner

(The Voluntarist, No. 108, pp. 1-7, 1st Quarter 2001)

School and State

By Benjamin R. Tucker

[Editor's Note: Benjamin Tucker was a well-known 19th Century libertarian whose comments on public schools and taxation are still of interest today. The following excerpts are taken from his articles which appeared in the April, May, June, and July 1876 issues of *The Word*, which was published by Ezra Heywood.]

Bishop McQuaid [an outspoken critic of tax-supported public schooling] asked for "free trade in education" and the abolition of public schools; in other words, freedom for each class of persons in the community to establish and conduct its own schools as it pleases, at its own cost, without being compelled at the same time to support through taxation, schools to which it is opposed. Viewing the question from a Catholic stand-point, and basing his argument upon freedom of conscience, the Bishop clearly expose[d] the impudence of the State in assuming to compel, or in any manner interfere with, the education of children; a matter which ought, in justice, to be left to the control of parents.

The objection, expressed by some, that he does not sufficiently consider the rights of the children, is of no force in this connection, for, since those who advance it do not claim the children are competent, before a certain age, to consider their rights for themselves, the question to whom should the authority to act in their stead be vested still remains open; and as authority obviously belongs to the author, and as parents are the authors of their children, Bishop McQuaid's position is impregnable.

J. M. K. Babcock, editor of THE NEW AGE, objects to our view on the school question ... and favors State instruction. ... But does Mr. Babcock realize wither his doctrine will lead him, provided he faithfully follows it? Not to dwell on the fact that, if the State should teach anything, it should expound on the supremely important matters of religion and the rights of conscience, thereby becoming a theocracy, we ask Mr. Babcock's especial attention to the no less alarming consequence that, if the State is better fitted than the parent to guard, provide for, and develop the young *mind*, it is surely by a parity of reasoning, better fitted to perform the same functions with respect to the youthful body; in other words, if children are to be educated by the State, they must be supported by the State. Apply to all our institutions the principle upon which our present school system

rests, and the United States would gradually transform itself into a mammoth [communist] community All our liberties would be destroyed.

Common schools, common property, and common family are three different (but in the long run) interdependent manifestations of the one despotic principle which has so long governed the world; *free* [market] schools, on the contrary, inevitably lead to free [market] labor, private ownership, and individual choice. Individual sovereignty on the one hand, ... communism on the other. ...

[Thus] since the principle upon which our common school system is founded is identical with that of absolute and thorough communism, no one can occupy a definite and consistent position upon the School Question without choosing between individualism and communism, freedom and force. ... Has not Mr. Babcock been defending the public school system? and is not that system supported by taxation? and does not, therefore, a defense of the one include a defense of the other? ...

If, however, ... it be true that society is impossible without the forced surrender of individual rights, then isolation is the brave man's choice. Said a celebrated Bishop of the English Church, in discussing prohibition or compulsory temperance, "If I must choose between England free and England sober, give me England free." So we say in discussing public schools, or compulsory education: if we must choose between America free and America educated [by the State], give us America free.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 108, pp. 7-8, 1st Quarter 2001)

Moral Ideas Tax Supported Schools Cannot Teach

By R. C. Hoiles

[Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the Santa Ana (CA.) *Register* on March 14, 1947, and was reprinted in that newspaper on July 10, 1968 (p. B6). See "'Nobody Cares About Hoiles; Everybody Cares About Freedom,'" in Whole No. 105 of *The Voluntaryist* for more information about the author.]

We are facing a battle of ideas.

One of the reasons we are in the trouble we are in today is that people are not taught the ideas that are in harmony with such moral laws as the Ten Commandments.

Compulsory education cannot teach these moral laws. Belief in these laws is absolutely necessary if we are to live together and develop character, peace, and material prosperity.

I want to name some moral ideas, some moral laws [that] proponents of tax-supported schools cannot teach unless people are not influenced by example and do not learn by imitating.

Here are some of them:

They cannot teach humility or meekness. They have so exalted and glorified themselves – they are so sure of their rightness – that they are willing to send the sheriff to make everyone comply [as in compulsory attendance laws]. They use force instead of persuasion and love.

They cannot teach individual responsibility. They are denying individual responsibility by their acts.

They cannot teach a definite limited government. They know no definite limit of government excepting the arbitrary will of men. [At this time, R.C. still believed that government could be "limited"; he did not yet realize that "limited government" is a contradiction in terms. – Ed.]

They cannot teach ... government [by] consent of the governed. They are violating the consent of those who disagree with them.

They cannot teach the inalienable rights of man. They are violating the[se] inalienable rights.

They cannot teach the Ten Commandments or what robbery is. They are practicing that the majority can do what would be robbery [if] done by the individual. If they were successful in teaching what collective moral

robbery is there would be no compulsory education.

They cannot teach any personal, eternal, universal rule of conduct. Their act[ion]s are in harmony with none.

They cannot teach the dignity or worth of every individual. They are practicing that the majority need not respect the dignity or worth of the individual.

They cannot teach the harm of initiating force. They are collectively initiating force via the tax collector against the individual.

They cannot teach love, or charity, or faith. They are saying by their actions that men do not have faith, that men will not do what they ought to do, that men will not be charitable, and have love. So they cannot teach faith, hope, charity, and love.

They cannot teach peace because they are initiating the opposite of peace – force.

They cannot teach the single standard of rightness because they are practicing a double standard. They would not claim that any individual had a moral right to use force to make another support his ideas of education. Yet they claim by their act[ions] that the majority has a right to do so.

They cannot teach that the individual cannot transfer to the state the right to do things that he originally does not have a right to do. They cannot teach this because they are trying to do it themselves.

They cannot teach rules that should govern taxation. They are practicing that the majority can take from one and give to another, that the government need not collect taxes in proportion to the cost of the service the government renders to each individual. [R.C. had not yet come to the realization that all taxation is theft; otherwise he would not have endorsed ‘rules that govern taxation’. – Ed.]

They cannot teach freedom or liberty. They are denying the freedom of the individual by ... compelling him to do something he thinks is harmful.

They cannot teach the importance of developing a conscience. They are substituting force for conscience and persuasion.

They cannot teach that there is any moral law superior to the will of man. They are using the will of the majority in place of God’s will.

They cannot teach the harm of socialism and communism and Fascism. They cannot teach their harm because they are practicing them.

They cannot teach that might does not make right. They cannot teach the opposite from what they are doing.

They cannot teach that the state is the servant of the individual rather than his master. They are his master when they are saying that he must pay

for an educational system [that] he thinks is out of harmony with God's laws.

They cannot teach that God's will and not that man's will or the majority's will must prevail.

They cannot teach these things any more than a robber can teach honesty.

It is little wonder that we have so much covetousness and hate when the people believe that their children can be educated in the important things in life – morals – by way of the state.

The grass roots of our trouble is that the wrong ideas are imbedded in the minds and hearts of the youth of the land. This is because the state cannot educate the youth in the value of these virtues. That is the reason that I am constantly taking the unpopular position of pointing out the great harm that comes from thinking that the youth of the land can be educated by bureaucrats paid for by compulsion.

To call anything education that cannot teach these eternal moral laws – ideas – is the worst form of fraud ever conceived in the mind of man. It is sounding brass – a tinkling cymbal. As long as we continue to pour our poisonous ideas into the youth of the land via state education it is absurd to think that they will understand these virtues and know how to live in harmony with them.

Just what moral ideas can government schools teach? I would like to know a single one that is in harmony with compulsory education.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 109, pp. 7-8, 2nd Quarter 2001)

State Schools and Communism

By B. J. McQuaid

A radical principle underlying the state school system is its unadulterated communism. The assertion that the state has the right to educate at the common expense one class of children to the practical exclusion of another class, is communism in its worst form. Every argument adduced to justify it in relieving parents, in one line of duty, of burdens they are able to carry, may be brought forward to relieve them in other lines of duty. It is the duty of the father ... to feed, to clothe, to shelter, and to educate his children.

[F]rom the principle of state schoolism [one is able to justify] state tailorism. Children in Chicago who plead that they cannot go to school for want of suitable clothing, are supplied by that city of socialistic tendencies with state trousers, frocks, and shoes. Herbert Spencer in *Social Statics* argues:

If the benefit, importance, or necessity of education be assigned as a sufficient reason why government should educate, then may the benefit, importance, or necessity of food, clothing, shelter, and warmth be assigned as a sufficient reason why government should administer these also?

When parental responsibility abdicates in favor of governmental responsibility, encouragement is lent to mendicancy, and the breeding of pauperism begins. Shutting our eyes to this unwelcome truth does not make it less a truth. Having drifted away from the sound practices of our American forefathers who believed in paying for the education, secular and religious, of their children we find ourselves swept along in a flood of pernicious political principles.

B. J. McQuaid in his article "Religion in Schools," *North American Review*, April 1881, and reprinted in his book *Christian Free Schools* (Rochester, 1892), pp. 148-149.

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 110, p. 3, 3rd Quarter 2001)

An Open Letter to Rev. Robert A. Sirico

By Carl Watner

An Open Letter
Rev. Robert A. Sirico, President
Acton Institute
161 Ottawa Avenue NW, # 301
Grand Rapids, MI 49503

I recently read your “President’s Message” in the Acton Notes of January 2008, and would like to share my comments and observations with you and your staff.

While much of our prescriptive strategies for working toward a free society overlap, I believe our basic assumptions differ. I have concluded that the State is an inherently invasive and criminal institution, while you consider it a necessary component of a free and healthy society. (Would you please correct me if I am wrong.) You imply that the State can help provide a moral foundation for a free society, but I see that as impossible since the State itself is thievery writ large. Consequently, I see it as highly contradictory to support a limited government, on the one hand, and on the other to seek to “shore up the cultural and moral foundations that establish and preserve the market economy” without pointing out that the State is, indeed, the primary enemy of civil society. I wish you would clarify the Acton Institute’s position vis-à-vis the State.

I am sure that we could argue all day long about why people believe that taxation is not stealing: it is the required dues for living in a civilized society; it is payment for the services government renders; citizens have consented to it by residing here; our enemies would invade us if we didn’t have armed services to protect us; and on, and on. But they all sidestep the main issue: that coercion must be applied against peaceful people in the collection process. If these alleged services are useful, let them be paid for like all other valuable services in society – voluntarily. If some people choose not to pay (all or part of) their taxes don’t throw them in jail or auction off their property. Treat them in a Christian manner: try to reason with them and persuade them to assume their social obligations. Would the Christian throw in jail those who refused to support the Church or a favorite charity? The fact that government is a “good cause” is no

justification for stealing from or jailing those who refuse to support it.

In your “President’s Message” you wrote that “There are societies that devolve into mass criminality and immorality. ... [I]t is most common in societies and social sectors in which socialism is practiced.” What, if not socialism, is our public education system; our police and judicial departments; our monetary system; our postal service; our roadway systems; and, last but not least, our armed forces? [Parenthetically, another problem, I note, is that the extensive presence of government-run schools in our society legitimizes the very existence of government itself. Who could imagine any government employee (such as a public school teacher, policemen, or soldier) questioning whether his salary came from stolen funds?]

Frank Chodorov once wrote a book titled, *The Income Tax: Root Of All Evil*. If I were to write such a book it would be titled *Taxation: One of the Major Roots of Evil*. Evil may reside in the heart of every person, but why give the government an opportunity to institutionalize and legitimize the crime of stealing by calling it taxation? When people and citizens are ready to apply the general social prohibition against stealing to the government itself, then we will have moved toward the “free and virtuous society” that the Acton Institute promotes. I look forward to reading your column every month, and hope that you will at least accept my message as ‘food for thought.’

Sincerely,
Carl Watner

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 142, p. 7, 3rd Quarter 2009)

R. C. Hoiles Revisited

Editorial, Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph*

[Editor's Note: Raymond Cyrus (R. C.) Hoiles (1878-1970) was the founder of the Freedom Chain of newspapers. For more than 35 years, in conversations, columns, and editorials, he stated his belief that human beings can enjoy happier and more prosperous lives where force and threats of force are absent from human relations. Although he started out as a supporter of limited government, he evolved into an able exponent of voluntarism. One of his pet themes was the separation of State and education. For many years, he had a standing offer of \$ 500 for any school superintendent in areas where his papers were published. He challenged public school officials to explain to him how State schools accorded with the Golden Rule. He was never seriously taken up on his offer. Hoiles also opposed the internment of Japanese-American citizens during World War II. He began as a printer's devil and operated 20 newspapers by the time he died. He presented a rare mixture of worldly practicality and principle, which marked him as a philosophical businessman. "A man should be free to make his own decisions," he used to say, "and to learn from his mistakes and to profit when his choice was wise and correct." The following was reprinted from an unsigned editorial in the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph*, July 11, 1972, p. 6-A, and is offered to our readers in the spirit of recognizing one of the unsung heroes of the 20th Century libertarian movement. For further information see an article by R. C. in *The Voluntarist*, Whole No. 17 ("Unlimited Voluntary Exchanges,") and "To Thine Own Self Be True: The Story of Raymond Cyrus Hoiles and his Freedom Newspapers," in Whole No. 18.]

Since the death of R. C. Hoiles (head of the Freedom Newspapers group), we have encountered a surprising number of individuals who have volunteered such remarks as, "Well, I used to think Hoiles was all wrong with the trend of events, I've about changed my mind;" "Hoiles was much closer to reality than many folks gave him credit. Some of his positions evoked emotional antagonism but the passing of time is proving him more and more correct;" "By God, he saw it coming. With government taxes consuming close to half of everything produced, who can argue with his warning?"

It would have been out of character for R. C. (as associates and friends called him), to have said, "I told you so," for his motive was never to be proven correct, but rather to stimulate people to see for themselves the

consequences of ever-expanding government.

One can go back to the days when he authored a signed column, from about 1935 until the 1950's, and find repeated warnings about the approaching leviathan state. Even prior to World War II, he continually explained the dangers of government deficits, pointing out that the inevitable result would be expanding credit to finance the deficits with resulting inflation. As more and more the federal government incurred deficits and financed itself by, in effect, repudiating its debt with inflation, R. C. warned that this "painless" sleight-of-hand, continued indefinitely, would give birth to a monster that could collapse the nation.

R. C.'s most controversial position related to what he thought would be the inevitable (he always thought of consequences in the long run) effect of government schooling the young. This was wildly distorted as being "against teachers" and against "people of little means" and an endless list of other emotional reactions that begged his points, which were:

1. The control of the schools would inexorably drift away from the "local control" concept to more centralized government control as the local units obtained funds from the larger government units. (As the state government offers more subsidy to the local school district, it demands more control. Then come federal funds and also the control attending such grants.) It would be illogical to conclude that once gaining this power, it would not teach that big government is the primary source of virtue and truth in order to perpetuate itself.

2. The foundation of a sound social order is rooted firmly in moral and ethical education, rather than training, and the government must by nature follow one of two courses: (a) neutrality because of differing views on what is sound moral and ethical reality; or (b) the advocating of views which are offensive to some individuals who are forced to submit their children and-or pay to support such views. This dilemma was answered largely by assuming a stance of neutrality which tends to produce children who have little or no basic philosophy of life unless obtained elsewhere. The result has been a reversal of some 2,000 years of educational philosophy which held that education was primarily for the purpose of inculcating a rational morality. Whether or not our present era is reaping the result of this could be disputed, but there are more and more people who sense something is seriously wrong with the grounding of the young.

Again, this was not meant to imply that the people - who manned the government school system - were "failing" in their job, but rather that their job just did not include and could not by its nature include this preeminent

phase of a child's rearing. The ancients well understood that the founding of a child in a sound morality is an almost full-time endeavor, with the most important place the educational process.

Further, he held it was just elementary justice that no one should be forced to support an educational system in which he did not believe, making no distinction between this and forcing people to support a religion they did not advocate.

Another position which R. C. clung to tenaciously was that it was immoral (in the sense of being out of harmony with natural order) for the government to tax some people for the benefit of other people. Call it welfare, subsidies, government sanctioned or encouraged monopolies, all these efforts were for the purpose of "robbing Peter to pay Paul." These are distributions of wealth on an involuntary basis and create consequences that in the long run are inimical to everyone, particularly the beneficiaries of the "booty."

R. C. ran it by thusly: if it is immoral for A and B, as individuals, to gang up on C and take his wealth by force, it is wrong for A and B to delegate to the government as their agent the right to rob C and split the loot with them. This was another way of saying what Mr. Jefferson meant when he contended "the same justice is owed from a million to one that is owed from one to a million."

More and more we witness the government becoming, as has been said, "an illusion by which everyone endeavors to live at the expense of everybody else," one out of six civilian employees is on the government payroll and by 1980 this ratio is supposed to drop to one in four.

Where will all this end?

One answer, possibly not far from the truth, is: "And the fall of Rome was mighty!"

But then, R. C. always held that the powers of regeneration are unbelievably great and that eventually men will understand the folly of forcing their fellow-man to labor to their advantage just because they have the political power to enforce such an action.

As R. C. would say, "It took men thousands and thousands of years to understand the folly of chattel slavery and it is going to take quite a spell to get people to understand that it is just as disastrous, in the long run, to be the slave of all-powerful government."

(The Voluntaryist, No. 146, pp. 2-3, 3rd Quarter 2010)

State Education Radically Wrong

By William Henry Ruffner

[Editor's Note: The excerpts below were written anonymously, and published in the *Presbyterian Critic* in 1855, and were reprinted in Volume 40 of the *Southern Planter and Farmer* in April 1879. The author was born in 1824, and became an advocate of government schools in his home state of Virginia in the late 1860s. Despite his change of opinion, his argument that "education by the state 'steps in between the parent and child' severing these tender ties" and that "public school officials disrupt family relationships and harm 'family' government" are as true today as when he wrote them. For additional information see Walter Javan Fraser, Jr., *William Henry Ruffner: A Liberal* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, March 1970, pp. 466-472.)]

Again, state education is but *educational communism*. They are based both upon the same philosophic fallacy, and are equally opposed to the nature of man. When the direct results of a man's labor are placed beyond his personal control, his great motive to exertion is taken away, and he feels but little inclination to labor at all. All can see how this is in the matter of property; why can they not see it in the matter of education? Let a man's children be fed and clothed by a public provision, and the proceeds of his labor be taken from him and thrown into a common stock; and it is easy to imagine that he will depreciate as a man, as a member of society. The same error is seen in the English Poor-Law system; and in all general State provision for the ordinances of religion. Pauperism in England grows by what it is fed upon. And when the State provides liberally for the religious wants of the people, the effect is corrupting upon the Church, collectively and individually; and that just in proportion as the provision is liberal. The whole system is calculated to withdraw the incentives to individual effort, and thus to weaken and emaciate the religious nature of the people. These have become familiar truths to us in America, and we are prone to wonder at the obtuseness of other nations on this subject. Why then will we shut our eyes to the fact that the whole fabric of State education rests upon the same sort of plausible argumentation that sustains the Church and State system of the Old World? They there say that religion is indispensable to the well being of the State - and that the work of enlightening the masses is too great to be left to private means; ergo, the State must undertake it. The advocates of State

education reason exactly so; education is indispensable to the well being of the State: the work of enlightening the masses is too great to be left to private means; ergo, the State must undertake it! If the latter argument is sound, the former is sound: but if the former is fallacious, the latter is fallacious! If a State provision for religion has proved an injury to the cause, and a curse to the people – so a State provision for education will prove an injury to the cause and a curse to the people.

The life of the State is in the life of its individual members. Take away from the head of a family all direct concern in the education of his children; let the school house be built for him, the teacher furnished, the whole routine of studies prescribed, length of session and hours of study all mapped out by commissioners, it being left to him only to take what is offered, to drive his children away from home early each morning, and to pay the tax-gatherer when he come round, and as certain as is the connection between cause and effect, his soul will be congealed, his interest in his family diminished, those ennobling affections which spring up spontaneously along the pathway of parental toil, will in a measure wither and die, and those tender solitudes which were meant to divert his mind from sordid pursuits, will be turned in to deepen that love of money for its own sake, which they were designed to check. He toils not now to educate his children, but to pay his taxes and accumulate a fortune. Were the money he pays a spontaneous offering for the good of his family, he would experience pleasure and enlargement of heart; but he instinctively hates a tax laid by government, even when he can but approve the object, and he is made a worse man by the visit of the sheriff. Of all taxes, that laid for an eleemosynary object, is the most revolting; because there is an instinctive feeling in the human breast that charity in every form ought to be free and not coerced; that it ought to be individual and not government.

The work of educating the entire population of our land is certainly a vast undertaking; but not as vast as the work of christianizing the same population. And the latter is, in every view, the more important work. Does that prove it to be the business of the State?

(The Voluntarist, No. 146, pp. 7-8, 3rd Quarter 2010)

Section IV

Family - Why Parenting Matters

“[T]he institution of the home is the one anarchist institution. ...
[I]t is older than law, and it stands outside the State.”

G. K. Chesterton, *What's Wrong With The World* (1910) in
Collected Works: Family, Society, Politics (San Francisco:
Ignatius Press, pp. 67, 72, and 257).

Society is an aggregation of individuals. Without individuals, society would not and could not exist. Individuals cannot exist without parents - without a mother and a father. Hence, the importance of parents.

Families are the basic units of society. As Dennis Helming points in his article, “We’re Just Parents!!!,” parenthood “is a voluntary commitment to give children what they need,” until the children are old enough to “become as free as they are responsible.” Parents do this by exposing their children to truth, by teaching that actions have consequences (good and bad; for the child as well as others). Parents teach by their own example: living and demonstrating the truth themselves, but ultimately each of their children must decide for themselves. The beauty, the danger, and the challenge of being parents is that each child has his or her own free will. Even though siblings come from the same genetic material, each of them is different; each of them will make their own decisions; each of them will ultimately be responsible for their own lives.

What would families look like in the absence of the State? No one knows for sure, but one certain historical fact is that all enemies of freedom (especially the State) have often attacked the family and tried to destroy it. It is quite natural that children’s first loyalty is to their parents and their extended family. As Bryce Christiansen describes it, in his article “Abolish the Family?”, the “family is an obstacle to social engineering.” For over 2000 years, from Plato to B. F. Skinner’s *Walden II*, the State has exhibited a “hostility to the family.” Its aim has been to weaken marriage and the family so that “there remains only love for the state.”

While many of us may not care to live like the Amish, the fact remains that they are one of the few groups in our modern society that has managed to remain aloof from government. They are largely exempt from Social Security taxes and from compulsory school laws, and they do not rely on the government for welfare, subsidies, or assistance. What do we see? As Allan Carlson notes, we see strong families, more plentiful children, and

men and women who are on the average happier and more content than their counterparts in our government-dominated society. In the conclusion to my article about “voluntaryism and the Old Order Amish” I quote from John Hostetler’s observation, written in 1952: The Amish believe that the

foundations of any civilization depend on the moral quality of the people living in it. Where better can such virtues as neighborliness, self-control, good will, and cooperation be found than in [families and] small communities? A civilization will thrive wherever these qualities are found, and will break down wherever they cease to exist. Perhaps the modern hurried, worried, and fearful world could learn something from the Amish.

Read on to find out why parenting is important. It is important because without good parents, we cannot have good children, and without good children, we cannot have a good society.

We're Just Parents!!!

By Dennis M. Helming

Gardening is perhaps the most apt analogy to parenting. Parents do not make, but only plant, the seed of human nature. Yet necessary growing conditions do not end there; human nature, like plants, requires frequent weeding, when not occasional pruning. In all these steps the gardener must accommodate all his cares to the plant's nature and requirements, neither giving it too much nor too little. Though less precise, quantifiable, and predictable, parents must aim at the same golden mean in dispensing cares for their child.

Parents are obliged both to respect their child's personality and nurture it so as to promote his greatest possible development, but their duties toward their children are neither infinite nor surefire. While conscientious parents will do what they can, they can neither guarantee nor weigh themselves with the complete responsibility for the outcome. Not only are there influences from outside the family circle, but above all, the child is endowed with his or her own freedom, a not inconsiderable variable. Parents are, after all, stewards with a considerable but limited liability.

To understand this reality is half the art and battle of parenthood. This truth helps to counter-balance the excessive expectations and dreams that envelop your child when he/she is young, while it cushions the blows and disappointments later on when there is a departure from the blueprint. And if the emotions – positive and negative; impetuous and irrational, in any case – attendant upon the ups and downs of parenting are to be corrected and compensated for, parents must recur to this objective perspective time and again. It will give them the detachment they need to maximize their involvement. It also makes for happier, healthier children, which is the most parents can hope for anyway.

None of us can psychologically function very well or for long without a modicum of stability in our basic relationships. Kids need to know – to sense in their attitude – that their parents are with them and for them for the long haul. Kids need to experience that their highs and lows are met by constancy, that their misbehavior does not modify their parents' fundamental disposition toward them; that, in a word, their parents' relationship toward them is unconditional, irrevocable. More than anything else, that bedrock, one-sided commitment is what constitutes a home for them.

That stable commitment of parents – we gladly repeat, to avoid even the remotest possibility of misunderstanding – is compatible with punishment and correction. When the latter are due and delivered in due measure, they do not negate but manifest the commitment. With their keen sense of justice, kids bear no grudges. What is guaranteed to ruin children is hostility without cause, infatuation without correction, and to a slightly, lesser extent, reactive rewards and punishments that look not to the child's welfare but to the parent's absence of hassle or their fulfillment (as if the kids were some sort of lifestyle experiment).

Interestingly enough, children, no matter what their age, never seem to outgrow the need for a home, a corner of understanding and stability where they can take their wounds, a refuge of peace and sanity when all else fails them. Who among us is so self-sufficient and invulnerable that he can dispense, even in adult life, with those who loyally root for him, no matter what, because their stewardship knows no end?

Parenthood, we have been saying, is a voluntary commitment to give children what they need; parents owe it to their kids because the latter cannot obtain it on their own or from elsewhere. Earlier we pointed out that parental justice principally consists in respecting and understanding them in their individuality and in their human nature and the needs that ensue from both. This is no exercise in fantasy, no figment of the imagination. Those needs are real, objective; good parents will try to discover them and meet them, making their attitudes and the actions conform to the truth of the human condition. When all is said and done, what children need from their parents is to be shown and told the truth: what they are, what they could be, and how to get there. Whether the children buy it – whole or part, sooner or later – is ultimately tied up with the unforeseeable way they administer their own free will. But one thing is sure: without exposure to these truths, they cannot help but make a mess of their lives. But when they are familiar with this three-part truth, the chances are greatly enhanced that children will voluntarily accept them and thereby liberate themselves from so many destructive untruths. Much depends, again, on how parents go about acquitting themselves of this debt.

They must come to see that there is no simple, infallible answer or approach. Children are more than a lump of modeling clay. Their free will must be won – neither bullied nor idolized – if they are to internalize the truths that will guide their authentic character growth. Much of this parental education is aimed at showing children that actions have consequences: good or bad; for themselves, for others. Initially, perhaps,

parents must rely on a judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments to condition their children's reflexes. But with the advent of increasing discretion, parents must learn to direct appeals to the mind and will.

The goal is to see their children ultimately become as free as they are responsible. But children are not free if they are not allowed to make mistakes – just as they will never be responsible if they are not helped to see the negative results of their misdeeds. By respecting their freedom while communicating to them criteria by which they may evaluate the uses of their freedom, parents create an atmosphere within which their children can learn from their behavior and modify it in the light of its consequences. Parents should focus their efforts on eliciting this freedom with responsibility rather than allowing themselves to get hung up on behavior: good, bad, or indifferent. But these two formative realities must grow apace. Freedom without responsibility is the worst kind of slavery; responsibility without freedom – cringing conformity to parental ukase – is, if anything, a shade worse.

But telling kids what is right and wrong, even if accompanied by progressive respect for their freedom, is not enough. Kids are too immersed in the here and now – immediate kicks and thrills – to remember often or in time the complicated and abstract reasons that would suggest to them a better course of action. To help them remember, parents should, though not always, impose consequences with a minimum of pique.

The biggest debt weighing on parents is the obligation to give good, attractive, and convincing example – to live the truth themselves. Example is not only the proverbial best teacher, but, inasmuch as most kids seem to hail from Missouri, about the only one. If virtue is its own reward rightly understood, let the children begin to pick up, via osmosis, that selfishness backfires and generosity fulfills, that lesser pleasures foregone open the door to higher ones, that work works, that the greatest fulfillment awaits him who concentrates on fulfilling others, and so forth. When the child begins to correlate the moral lessons, he/she has been told with the cheerful example that is displayed, then parents can rest content that they have not shortchanged their children, that they have communicated the whole truth.

From Brookfield Academy's *Knights' Notes*, Winter '89.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 46, p. 7, October 1990)

One of our Most Human Experiences: Voluntaryism, Marriage, and the Family

By Carl Watner

Introduction

As with my article on education a few issues ago, this essay is sparked by the fact that I am a husband and parent. References have been made in earlier issues of *The Voluntaryist* about my marriage (Whole No.20) and family (Whole Nos. 26 and 40). In the latter, I referred to my second son, Tucker, whose namesake, Benjamin Tucker (publisher and editor of *LIBERTY*, 1881-1908), was never legally married in the eyes of the State. Nevertheless, he and his wife, Pearl, were considered by their daughter to be “the most monogamous couple,” she had ever seen, “absolutely devoted to each other to the end.”

As these and other freedom-seekers have shown, marriage and the family can be respected institutions without involving either Church or State. Indeed, it is possible that a man and woman may fall in love with one another, marry, remain monogamous, raise a family, and lead honest, productive lives without seeking the permission or sanction of any civil or ecclesiastical authority. I believe that marriage and the family, if they are not coercively interfered with, are voluntary in nature. Just as the individual is the fundamental unit of society, so the family is the chief structural unit of society. The State only serves to disorganize and disrupt the family and kinship systems, which are the fundamental infrastructure of voluntaryist communities. Consequently, this article will review the origins, evolution, and history of our familial and marital institutions from a voluntaryist point of view.

Voluntaryism and Marriage

Anthropologists and social commentators have observed that, practically all – including even the simplest – human societies exhibit a complex system of “universal and primeval institutions.” These include the incest taboo – the prohibition of marriage and/or sexual relations within the immediate family; exogamy – rules ensuring marriage outside a certain group, usually larger than the primary group; kinship – the recognition of

various categories of kin who behave toward one another in prescribed ways; marriage – which universally legitimizes offspring and creates in-law relations; the family – the basic economic unit of society; a division of labor based on age and sex; and the notion of territory (which includes the concept of property). Although our discussion will primarily focus on marriage and the family, the point is that for untold centuries these patterns of group behavior have performed a wide range of valuable societal functions regardless of how the State or Church has interfered with them or regulated them.

Marriage, in all its various forms, has probably existed almost as long as men and women. For thousand of years, it has been recognized that “a permanent relationship between a man and a woman for the purpose of nurturing children, offers the best chance of human happiness and fulfillment.” This union is necessitated by certain biological facts. Not only does it take both a man and a woman to have children, but the presence of a father is of considerable benefit, given the great length of infancy, and the hardships encountered by a mother raising young children by herself. The essence of marriage seems to be found in the living together (cohabitation) of a man and a woman, with some sort of solemn public acknowledgment of the two persons as husband and wife. Thus, it becomes a socially and culturally approved relationship between the two, which includes the endorsement of sexual intercourse between them with the expectation that children will be born of the union. The ultimate societal purpose, of course, is to make provision for the replacement of its members.

George Elliott Howard in his three volume work, *A History of Matrimonial Institutions*, noted that the primitive and medieval marriage was strictly a lay institution. “There was no trace of any such thing as a public license or registration; no authoritative intervention of priest or other public functionary. It [was] purely a private business transaction. Either the guardian gives away the bride and conducts the ceremony; or else the solemn sentences of the ritual are recited independently by the betrothed couple themselves. These formalities and the presence of the friends and relatives are only means of publicity, Rights and obligations growing out of the marriage contract are enforced... just as other civil rights and obligations are enforced.” It was only gradually beginning around the 13th Century, that this ancient usage was superseded by the Church’s claim to jurisdiction.

Due to its strictly personal nature, marriage has nearly always had to include the consent of the parties. In fact, in the theory of American law,

no religious or civil ceremony is essential to create the marriage relationship. A common-law marriage may be defined as a contract which is created by the consent of the parties, just as they would create any other contract between themselves. A common-law marriage need not be solemnized in any particular way; rather it is based on mutual agreement between persons legally capable of making a marriage contract in order to become man and wife. It is an unlicensed and unrecorded affair from the State's point of view. Common-law marriages are based on the recognition of the fact that marriages took place prior to the existence of either Church or State. As an early advocate of free love put it, "a man and a woman who... love one another can live together in purity without any mummary at all – their marriage is sanctified by their love, not by the blessings of any third party, and especially not the blessing of any church or state."

Martyred for Marriage

The first couple in America to be "martyrized" by state marriage laws was Edwin C. Walker and Lillian Harman, of Valley Falls, Kansas. They attempted to assert their right to live as husband and wife without the benefit of the State's sanction. Instead of leaving them alone, the State of Kansas prosecuted them, and imprisoned them in the late 1800s. Both Walker and Harman were part of the radical tradition of free love and "free marriage," a term that epitomized for them "the freedom of the individual within an enlightened partnership in which neither partner would rule or be ruled." Edwin Cox Walker was born in New York in 1849. He had farmed, been a school teacher, and by the early 1880s became a noted speaker and writer on the topics of free-thought and free-love. It was during this time that he made the acquaintance of Moses Harman, editor and publisher of the *Kansas Liberal*, which later became *Lucifer, The Light Bearer*. *Lucifer* took up the cudgel for anarchism and free love, but its "specialty [was advocating] freedom of women from sex slavery."

Moses' sixteen year-old daughter, Lillian, wed Walker, thirty-seven, on September 19, 1886, in what they both described as an "autonomistic marriage" ceremony. "The ceremony began with the reading of a 'Statement of Principles in Regard to Marriage' by the father of the bride," in which Moses Harman explained his opposition to male dominance in marriage. Conventional wedlock placed the man in power, even to the extent of merging the "woman's individuality as a legal person into that of her husband" by requiring her to surrender "her name, just as chattel slaves were required to take the name of their master." "Marriage being a strictly personal matter," Harman denied "the right of society, in the form of

church or state, to regulate it or interfere... ." To acknowledge the right of outside "authorities" to dictate in these matters would be to "acknowledge ourselves the children or minor wards of the state, not capable of transacting our own business." He compared his stand on marriage to his position on temperance: "he practiced abstention from liquor and he practiced monogamy in marriage, but he opposed state enforcement of his beliefs on anyone else; true morality, he believed, demanded liberty of choice in such matters." He rejected all laws which limited the solemnization of marriage to the civil or religious authorities. External regulation by the State or Church was "not only wrong in principle, but disastrous to the last degree in practice." Harman regarded "intelligent choice – untrammelled voluntaryism – coupled with responsibility to natural law for our act[ion]s, as the true and only basis of morality."

Walker made his pronouncement to the assembled family and friends, after Harman had finished reading his statement. He repudiated "all powers legally conferred upon husband and wives," by acknowledging "Lillian's right to the control of her own person, name, and property; he also specifically recognized her equality in the partnership, while recognizing his own 'responsibility to her as regards to care of offspring, if any, and her paramount right to the custody thereof should any unfortunate fate dissolve this union'." Then he explained that "the wholly private compact is here announced not because I recognize that you or society at large, or the State have any right to enquire into or determine our relationship to each other, but simply as a guarantee to Lillian of my good faith toward her, and to this I pledge my honor." Lillian then acknowledged her agreement with the views of her father and husband-to-be, after which Moses Harman refused to "give away the bride," because he wished "her to be always the owner of her person, and to be free always to act according to her truest and purest impulse, and as her highest judgment may dictate."

The following day, the constable presented the couple a warrant charging them with flouting the peace and dignity of Kansas, by "unlawfully and feloniously living together as man and wife without being married according to statute." They were taken into custody, and spent their second night together under armed guard in Valley Falls. On September 21, 1886, they were jailed in the county jail at Oskaloosa, Kansas, but Lillian was permitted to return home pending the outcome of the trial. At the preliminary hearing, a week later, their attorneys argued that the observance of the statutory requirements (obtaining a license) violated their liberty of conscience, and therefore was unconstitutional.

The county attorneys countered “that society had rights in the matter of marriage, that these rights had been ignored, and that the authority of the state had been defied.”

The presiding judge held the couple over for a trial “on charges of violating Section 12 of the Marriage Act, which deemed ‘any persons, living together as man and wife, within this state, without being married [as required by law],’ guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine of from \$500 to \$1000 and a jail sentence of from thirty days to three months.”

Lillian was returned to custody on October 6, when both she and Walker were taken to the Shawnee County jail in Topeka to await their trial, which commenced on October, 14. The trial ended when “the jury found the couple guilty of living together as man and wife without first having obtained a license and [without] being married by a legally prescribed officer.” At their sentencing on the 19th, Walker was given 75 days in the Jefferson County jail, and Lillian 45. “In addition, both were to remain in jail until court costs were paid.” Incarcerated pending appeal, their case reached the Kansas Supreme Court in January of 1887.

In a decision reached on March 4, the court refused to overturn their conviction. Although the court upheld the legal validity of their common-law marriage in the state of Kansas, it punished the defendants for not complying with the state’s marriage statute which required a license. The Chief Justice noted that “the question... for consideration is, not whether Edwin Walker and Lillian Harman are married, but whether, in marrying, or rather in living together as man and wife, they have observed the statutory requirements.” In other words, the court decided that “punishment may be inflicted upon those who enter the marriage relation in disregard of the prescribed statutory requirements, without rendering the marriage itself void.” The Kansas Marriage Act of 1867, like marriage legislation in other states, provided punishment for ministers or magistrates who might marry a couple before they obtained a marriage license. Likewise it punished the couple themselves for failing to be married as prescribed by the law. Although they had already served their jail time, the couple refused to pay court costs until April 1887, when they were released (the impetus for their payment was the fact that the authorities had tried to close *Lucifer* down by arresting Lillian’s father and brother in February 1887, on charges of publishing obscenities).

The legal questions of the Walker-Harman union demonstrate the confusing and technical nature of 19th Century American law with regard to marriage. (Every state had its own marriage law, and these often

differed from those of neighboring states.) The term “marriage license” found its origin in early English ecclesiastical practice, “in accordance with which a bishop’s license or archbishop’s license released candidates for marriage from the obligation of publishing banns in church.” The banns were simply notice of the intent of marry, usually given three times in the parish church of each espoused. Maine became the first state in the union, in 1858, to invalidate a marriage contract unless the couple had been granted a state license. Adoption of the marriage licensing system came slowly in the United States; in 1887, there were still eleven states that had no laws requiring the issuance of a marriage license. Some states, like Kansas, prohibited unlicensed marriages, but then retreated from this position in finding that if such marriages occurred, they were not to be held invalid. Nevertheless, the marriage statutes sometimes penalized the couple (like Harman and Walker) or the officiant who married the couple without a license. Today, common-law marriages are recognized in 14 states. In the other states, there are statutes that explicitly nullify such non-state marriages.

Common-law Marriage

Judicial recognition and legitimation of common-law marriage in the United States found its legal roots in England. There, like many other places around the world, marriage customs were shaped by the development of cultural traditions, and ecclesiastical and civil law. Until 1753, when Parliament passed the Hardwicke Act, marriage in England had been governed by medieval customs and the Anglican Church. English canon law had always recognized the validity of a marriage without the benefit of clergy. The statute of 1753 required that marriage be solemnized by the publication of banns and take place before an Anglican clergyman. Although such marriages were recorded in the Church parish records, no civil registration of marriage was required in England until 1836. Such laws worked great hardship against the dissenters and non-conformists. For example, the Quakers, who rejected the traditional ring ceremony and the Anglican Church observances, believed that marriage was a divine institution – “a matter between man and his own conscience and one in which the priest shall have nothing to do.” It was probably out of respect for the sincerity of beliefs such as these that common-law marriages were held valid in England.

Since marriage by consent alone was legal in England while its settlers colonized much of North America, American courts generally held that common-law marriages were valid here, too. Such was the case in 1809,

when Chief Justice James Kent of the New York State Supreme Court decided that no special form of marriage solemnization was required, since there had been no marriage statute in the New York colony or state since 1691. The existence of a marriage contract, the Chief Justice declared, may be proved “from cohabitation, reputation, acknowledgment of the parties, acceptance in the family, and other circumstances from which a marriage may be inferred.” The strength of public sentiment in New York against any marriage licensing system can be gauged by the fact that a marriage statute of 1827 was repealed shortly after it went into effect in 1830. The repealed law had sought to place the responsibility for policing and recording all marriages upon the clergy and civil magistrates. Writing in 1832, Kent noted in his *Commentaries* (Vol. 2, p. 88) that “these regulations were found to be inconvenient,” and “they had scarcely gone into operation when the legal efficacy of them was destroyed and the loose doctrine of the common law was restored by the statute of 20th April 1830, declaring the solemnization of marriage need not be in the manner prescribed, and that all lawful marriages contracted in the manner in use before the Revised Statute could be as valid as if the articles containing those regulations had not been passed.” The earlier decision of 1809 (*Fenton v. Reed*, 4 Johns., 52) continued to govern the policy of New York until common-law marriage was superceded by a statute of 1901.

Unlike the situation in New York, the courts in Massachusetts never recognized common-law marriage. Although early Separatists and Puritans regarded marriage as “purely a civil contractual relation,” and therefore concluded that “the parties may marry themselves as they may make other contracts,” they also held that marriage, like all other civil institutions must be regulated by municipal law. Marriage must be sanctioned by the civil authority, “and for that reason persons may be fined for marrying without observing the forms prescribed by statute.” In actual practice, even though the Massachusetts settlers considered marriage to be a contract, they looked upon it differently than all other forms of contract, such as tenant-landlord or servant-master. “In these the parties may in general make their rights and duties what they please, the law only intervening when they are silent” upon some point. In marriage, however, every right and duty was fixed by law. Nevertheless, this point of view was not universally accepted by all the colonists and “seems to have been resented by the more radical as an interference with individual liberty.” Edward Perry, a resident of Cape Cod in 1654, was twice fined for self-marriage, and placed on “notice that his fine would be repeated every three months till he complied.”

The position of the early Christian Church was not so far removed from this radical attitude. Marriage was already a well-established social institution when Christianity was founded. In the early Christian communities, marriage of the faithful was governed by local customs so long as they did not conflict with the tenets of the Church. Although the early Church “admonished its members to contract their marriages publicly under its officials in order to insure and preserve the integrity and dignity” of the marriage contract, “broadly stated, the canon law maintained the validity of all proper marriages solemnized without the priestly benediction, though spiritual punishment might be imposed for the neglect of religious duty.” During the Thirteenth Century, the clergy began expanding its role in the marriage ceremony by “appropriating the right of the father or the guardian of the bride to officiate at wedding ceremonies.” Its motives were to impart a more religious form to the nuptials, and to avoid the evils resulting from clandestine or secret unions. However, it was not until the Council of Trent in 1563, that there was an official church requirement that marriages be contracted in the presence of a bishop or parish priest, and two other witnesses. “The main object of the provision of the Council of Trent was to give publicity to marriage, and to bring the fact of marriage to the notice of the Church.”

Church and State vs. Voluntaryism and The Family

Like the institution of marriage, the family is clearly one of the most ancient forms of social bonding. For thousands of years, the family has been the center of all social structure. Apart from the individual, it is the lowest common denominator, and the very heart of all group organization and interaction. As Peden and Olahe have written, “the family, in its minimal nexus of parent and child, must be co-temporal with the origin of the human race and natural in its grounding in the biological relationship of a parent and child arising from procreation and nurturing.” The “essence of the familial entity,” as they see it, centers “on the responsibility for nurturing children until they reach self-sustaining autonomy,” since it is biologically necessary that some adult care for the infant until “it can fend for itself.” Thus, the family had its roots deep in the physiological conditions of human mating, reproduction, and education. The State, on the contrary, they point out, “is not a biological necessity. Men and women have survived and even flourished outside its purview and power.”

Like marriage customs, the structure and characteristics of the family vary from culture to culture, and from era to era: most monogamous, some polygamous; most are patriarchal, others matriachical. Methods of child-rearing may vary widely, but the point is that this great diversity represents the enduring strength and voluntaryist nature of the family. “This very

diversity points to [its origin in the] spontaneous order!” Whatever or wherever the culture, the family is always voluntary. It begins in the mutual attraction of one sex for the other, expands to include some type of formal or informal contract, and always remains beneficial to the participants.

The State is always hostile to the family because it cannot tolerate rival loyalties. It must inevitably attempt to make itself more important than the family or kinship system, which it seeks to supersede. It establishes a coercive orthodoxy from which there is no escape except by emigration, death, or treason. Under all authoritarian governments, children are separated from their parents (at least part of the time, the most prominent example being schooling) because the State needs to weaken the child-parent relationship. In the more totalitarian societies, children often live apart from their parents, but if not, they are encouraged to report any signs of parental disloyalty or treason to the authorities. This pits the loyalty of the children to the State against the love of their parents. This conflict even exists in America today. Is a spouse or child to denounce one’s partner or parent for violation of a political crime, like violating the income tax or drug laws? To whom is one loyal?

That voluntarism is at the heart of the family can be seen by observing what happens when the State enters the picture. “Many of the adverse consequences of social policy today can be described as the result of attempting to have the State function as father in the family.” Family relations are invariably upset, controlled, perverted, distorted, or weakened by political interference. By claiming that nearly all forms of social activity have some sort of compelling state interest – an interest in the fate of children and civil society, the State attempts to involve itself in every marriage and every family. The State intervenes for the purpose of educating the young – more often by removing them from their parents for one-third of their waking hours and using state schools to indoctrinate them with statist attitudes; less often by placing them in foster-care homes. The obligation of caring for elderly parents is undermined with the introduction of welfare-state provisions like Social Security and Medicare. Rather than resorting to family first, people begin to focus on the State as their main source of “problem-solving and mutual aid.”

Although State power rests on conquest, coercion, and ideological persuasion, in an effort to legitimize themselves, political leaders describe the State in family-like terms (“Big Brother,” “Führer,” and even “Uncle Sam”). As Robert Nisbet has noted, the State invariably takes on the “trappings and nomenclature of the family and of religion.” In fact he

notes that the Church and State seem to have more in common with each other than with the economic realm – the market place. Although State and church have been arch-enemies over long periods of time, “it is a fact that in the succession of power that forms the greatest single pageant in Western history, the state has succeeded the church in the detailed and minute custodianship of the individual. [S]ince the eighteenth century, the state has ... taken over [what were] once ecclesiastical functions.” The Middle Ages represented the height of Church governance – “birth, marriage, death were all given legitimacy by the church, not the state. ... Much of modern ... history is the story of the gradual transfer ... of ecclesiastical absolutism” to the modern State. Nationalism and statism have replaced religion as the new State church.

Both the Church and the State attempt to exert their control over our “most human experience” in order that people might become accustomed to accepting the legitimacy of outside authorities intervening in their personal affairs. Although the institution of marriage obviously existed before “there were any legislatures to enact marriage laws, or any churches to ordain priests,” for all practical matters both organizations work together to enforce the statist marriage licensing system. For example, the Catholic Church does not recognize common-law marriages (the couple are considered to be living in sin, even in those political jurisdictions where common-law marriages are legal), and will not bless a marriage unless the couple can provide a copy of their state marriage license.

Marriage Licenses

The offense of marrying without a license is just like the crime of practicing medicine without a license. The crime is created by fiat, not by the natural act of marrying or healing. *Black’s Law Dictionary* states that: “a license is the permission by a competent authority to do any act which, without such permission would be illegal.” A license is something needed to keep the act in question from being illegal from the point of view of the State. For example, hunting and fishing are not wrong in and of themselves, but the State makes these activities illegal without a license. As John Kelso (a 19th Century advocate of “autonomistic marriages,” like that of Walker and Harman) pointed out, the marriage licensing system creates a victimless crime because the act of marrying injures no third party.

State licensing systems (whether it be of marriage, fishing, hunting, etc.) serve many purposes. First, they instill and legitimize the idea of State control over the activities of the individual. Second, they raise revenue for

the State and provide jobs for state employees. Third, in commercial enterprises they tend to protect the “ins” from competition by restricting entry. In short, they deny the natural right of the individual to act without first obtaining permission from some authority. Licensing laws inculcate the idea that anything not authorized by law is illegal and may not be undertaken without permission.

Just as voluntaryists oppose compulsory licensing laws in medicine, or barbering, or any other profession, they oppose coercive laws in the realm of marriage. There is no more reason to require or regulate the registration of real estate conveyances or mortgages than there is to require licensing of marriages. If there is a market demand for services to record or register such transactions (whether in real estate or family affairs), then private, voluntary registration bureaus will be forthcoming on the market. The marriage licensing system has been so long in existence, that the free and voluntary market has never been given an opportunity to show how it might operate in this area of our lives.

“Would society degenerate into promiscuous and homosexual debauchery in the absence of marriage laws?” Were we accustomed to government or church regulation of our eating habits, is it likely that we would stop eating if all outside interventions were removed? Hardly – eating is as natural to us as marrying or raising a family. In fact, our marriage and family institutions would be stronger if third-party intervention ceased. A state marriage certificate, like a bank charter or some other official certification, provides a false sense of security. Possession of a marriage license certainly doesn’t solve any of its possessor’s marital problems, and probably helps induce a false sense of confidence in those who marry. In other words, dispensing with the legal licensing of marriage would strengthen respect for marriage; its absence would make people not less cautious, but more cautious concerning their marital affairs. For after all, how do marriage laws contribute toward making the parties true to each other? The large majority of those who are true to their partners base their fidelity upon love and honor, “not upon terrors of the law.”

Prescription for Sound Living

Many of the social institutions of Western civilization are based on the Old Testament moral code, especially those rules found in the Ten Commandments. Theft, murder, adultery, covetousness, bearing false witness, and sexual promiscuity were all placed in the same prohibited category. The purpose of such a moral code was to help protect private

property, the family, the integrity of marriage, and promote peaceful, harmonious social relationships in the community. Although often times the reasons for these rules are lost sight of, when one examines them “one finds in [them] the most reasonable and logical guide to a healthy, happy life.” They present “a moral code based on a profound understanding of human nature and human experience,” and contain a prescription for sound living, regardless of where or how they originated. If one studies them and understands the operation of the free market, one perceives the connections between war, sexual decadence, inflation, and political corruption, which all collapsing civilizations (including ours) experience.

As James J. Martin once observed, “the family is the wellspring” of all social tendencies. The family is the place where we all ordinarily start, “where the fundamental ideas relating to self and mutual aid are first engendered, the incubation place where dedication to one’s welfare and to that of one’s closest associates is emphasized, and where respect or disrespect to the State is first seen, felt, and emulated.” The family as an institution is one of the strongest bulwarks against the encroaching State and the disrespect for private property which statism engenders. A strong family is most likely to produce principled individuals who are spiritually and mentally prepared to withstand statist propaganda. And the State understands this as it consciously or unconsciously implements political policies which undermine and destroy the family. Many of the major changes which have taken place in the family during this century are not the result of unfettered individual or family decision-making. Rather they have been shaped by major statist wars, governmental legislation, and the often disastrous results of centralized economic planning.

Marriage and the creation of a family are one of the most important and most basic elements in the spontaneous order. As Wilhelm von Humboldt once wrote, such a relation cannot mold itself according to external, third-party arrangements, but depends wholly upon inclination and mutual satisfaction of all the immediately concerned parties. The introduction of coercion into such relationships can only divert them from the proper path. State intervention is as counter-productive in the family-marital realm as it is in the economic realm; and for all the same reasons. That is not to say that people will not make mistakes when they are left to their own devices, but it is surely better to suffer the “ills of freedom” than to attempt to cure them at the expense of restricting individual liberty. “To curtail that freedom is to cut away part of the foundation of further progress.”

Or paraphrasing Albert Jay Nock, as he once so eloquently put it:

Freedom is the only condition under which any kind of substantial moral fiber can be developed. Freedom means the freedom to marry as many partners as one wishes or the freedom to drink one's self to death, but it also means the freedom to be self-disciplined and be a life-long monogamist, or to never get married, or to never drink, or to drink in moderation. The voluntaryist is not engaged by the spectacle of sots or polygamists or pornographers, but rather points to those who are responsible, responsible by a self-imposed standard of conduct. He asserts that the future belongs to them, not to those who engage in vicious conduct. He believes in absolute freedom in sexual relations, yet when the emancipated man or woman goes on the loose, to wallow along at the mercy of raw sensation, he is not interested in their panegyrics upon freedom. He turns to contemplate those men and women who are responsibly decent, decent by a strong, fine, self-sprung conscious of the Right Thing, and he declares his conviction that the future lies with them. The desire for freedom has but one practical object, i.e., that men and women may become as good and as decent, as elevated and as noble, as they might be and really wish to be. Under freedom they can, and rather promptly will, educate themselves to this desirable end; and so long as they are in the least dominated by statism, they never can.

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As Values Collapse, Government Grows

By Lawrence W. Reed

Ethical relativism or “non-ethics” as I prefer to call it – has suffused its position throughout society, and is a major reason why America seems to be losing its moral compass. But that isn’t the only thing we’re losing.

The first casualty when the ethical core of society evaporates is freedom. Law (government) fills the void – directing by threat of force those aspects of life that formerly were governed by our ethical standards. Ethical people don’t require fines for tossing trash out of car windows or for embezzling funds from their employer, because ethical people just don’t do those things.

Nor do ethical people abandon responsibility for the education of their children or the care of their parents and expect society to do the job. Ethical people don’t cast off their problems onto others because they have both a healthy dose of self-esteem and a respect for the lives and property of others.

The choice, in other words, is to govern yourself or be governed. The less you do of the former, the more you’ll get of the latter.

Ultimately, the standards by which we order our personal lives and our relationships with family, associates and others determine the sum and substance of our society. When those standards are strong, people take care of themselves and those around them; they work for a living instead of voting for one.

But when those standards decay, we pay the price in broken families, crime, drug abuse, child neglect, a loss of personal independence and greater reliance upon public welfare. If the rot gets deep enough, the price can be reckoned in terms of national bankruptcy and dictatorship. Whole civilizations in history have traveled this path and bit the dust.

Restoring our ethical foundations ought to be top priority for all Americans. There’s just too much at stake for us to do otherwise.

(These excerpts were taken from an article which appeared as “A Mackinac Center Viewpoint On Public Issues,” February 24, 1992, published by the Mackinac Center for Public Policy, Midland, Michigan.)

(The Voluntaryist, No. 58, p. 6, June 1992)

Abolish the Family?

By Bryce J. Christensen

The fear that the “nuclear” family is on the way out is not the hysterical reaction of a few supporters of President Bush as they face four years of Clinton & Clinton. It is a genuine concern of anyone who understands the history of statist designs. As the mixed economy increasingly favors socialism over bourgeois property relations, the family loses its structure and autonomy.

Since Plato, utopians have viewed the state as an agency empowering an enlightened elite to create the ideal society. Individual freedom counts for little, but traditional family autonomy counts for even less, since the family is an obstacle to social engineering. The state can easily deal with individuals, but the self-reliant family poses a more difficult challenge.

The assault has changed little over time. In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates wants to foster complete identification with the state, uncompromised by any attachments to spouse or home. His plan requires free love and raising children in anonymous groups: “no parent is to know his own child, nor any child his parent.”

Similar proposals include Tommaso Campanella’s *City of the Sun* (1623), Abbe Morelly’s *Code De La Nature* (1755), Dom Leger-Marie Deschamps’ *Le Vrai Systeme* (1761), Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* (1888), William Morris’s *News From Nowhere* (1891), H.G. Wells’ *Modern Utopia* (1905), Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Moving The Mountain* (1911), and B.F. Skinner’s *Walden Two* (1948).

All evince a hostility to the family, and almost always want to take children out of the hands of amateurs (parents) and give them to state-credentialed specialists. Mothers in Campanella’s utopia, for example, turn their two-year-old children over to state-appointed educators.

In Gilman’s *Moving The Mountain*, certified government experts insure that all children receive “proper nourishment, and clothing, and environment – from birth.” Government officials permit no women “to care for their children without proof of capacity.” Skinner depicts a society in which groups, not parents, care for children, because they provide greater opportunities for applying science.

All want to weaken marriage, and some wish to abolish it. When we have taken away marital love, remarks Campanella’s narrator, “there remains only love for the state.” Plans to make wives economically

dependent on the state instead of their husbands also appear in Morelly, Bellamy, Morris, Wells, Gilman, and Skinner.

Modern politics has brought these dreams out of literature and into legislatures, as statist work to undermine all non-governmental authority – commercial, artistic, ecclesiastical, scholarly, and familial.

Modern activists urge state licensing of parents, allegedly to prevent child abuse. Claudia Pap Mangel, in *Family Law Quarterly*, argues that parent licensing makes more sense than ad hoc judicial intervention in cases of “potential neglect.” Courts are evincing a new willingness to intervene in the home in cases of alleged marital rape, thereby abandoning the legal tradition which assumed the married couple to represent a single legal entity.

G.K. Chesterton wrote that “the trend toward divorce” is part “of that modern change which would make the state infinitely superior to the family.” Some people equate easy divorce with freedom, but as ties to spouses have grown weaker, bonds to tax collectors have grown stronger.

The welfare state has played no small part in weakening the family. The growth of single parent households is the best evidence. As they increase, the state finds ever more clients for its redistributive and therapeutic services, while imposing heavier burdens on intact families. The welfare state tends to displace or impoverish the household economy. Eventually, it creates the crisis which statist would resolve through yet more government.

The dreams of these utopian statist are being realized through incremental steps. But ordered liberty requires the family, and cannot exist in its absence for very long. Therefore, those who would rigorously defend liberty cannot overlook the designs of contemporary utopians, whose tune has changed little since Plato’s *Republic*, even if played on an Arkansas saxophone.

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By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them: Voluntaryism and the Old Order Amish

By Carl Watner

Introduction

In 1984, I published an article entitled: “The Noiseless Revolution,” (*The Voluntaryist*, Whole No. 10) about voluntaryism and the railroad industry’s development of standard time zones. At that time I had not been aware that there were any modern-day Americans who refused to use government-mandated daylight savings time. In 1989, I came across Donald Kraybill’s book, *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, and realized that during the Great Depression, those same “refuseniks” would not accept government money due them under the crop reduction provisions of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. During World War I, out of religious conviction they refused to buy government bonds and fight in the armed forces. During World War II, they refused to use government-issued ration stamps for the purchase of food and other necessities. They resisted participation in Social Security by not paying their taxes, and were finally exempted by Congressional action. They refuse to use televisions or install telephones in their homes, to own or drive automobiles or farm tractors with pneumatic tires, nor will they bring electricity generated by “public utilities” into their homes. They won a Supreme Court decision which protected their parental rights (based upon the tenets of their religion) to terminate their children’s formal education at the eighth grade. They believe in complete nonviolence, preferring to “turn the other cheek,” rather than harm another human being. Who are these people, and why do they behave like a cross between the ancient Stoics and a modern-day Gandhi?

During the summer of 1993, my interest in the Amish was rekindled by an article by Gene Logdson on “Amish Economics: A Lesson for the Modern World,” parts of which I reprinted in Whole No. 66 of *The Voluntaryist*. What was the reason for their “separate and peculiar” way of life? How principled was their rejection of government programs? To what extent did they really distance themselves from the government? Could they be considered voluntaryists? What was the basis of their religion and lifestyle?

Never having met an Amishman, how could I hope to answer these

questions? In the course of writing this article, I contacted several Amish people, who for the most part were quite reserved and unhelpful. However, I did find a number of books and authors, who seemingly understood the Amish and presented their case to the modern-day world. Along with these academic sources, I also discovered a world of lay literature – *The Budget*, a weekly Ohio newspaper devoted to “The Amish-Mennonite Communities Throughout the Americas”, *The Diary*, a Pennsylvania monthly magazine “Serving the Old Order”, a yearly Amish publication, *The New American Almanac*, and the many books of Pathway Publishers (Aylmer, Ontario) and Good Books Publishers (Intercourse, Pennsylvania). While the study of these materials has not made me an authority on the Old Order Amish, they have provided me with some insight into their culture and way of life. Any errors of interpretation, naturally, remain my responsibility.

The following analysis of Amish life and history is obviously written from a voluntaryist point of view. If we define voluntaryism as the philosophy of life that all the affairs of people should remain private and voluntary – that relations among people should be by mutual consent or not at all – then clearly we can characterize members of the Old Order Amish as falling within the voluntaryist fold. Perhaps they might not agree with this assessment. Nevertheless they meet the criteria. They both preach and practice nonviolence, they generally reject electoral politics, and are antagonistic to the modern state. They also use and respect private property, although they do not believe in unbridled individualism or in accumulating wealth for wealth’s sake. One would be hard pressed to find any other large and cohesive group of people in the modern world that not only practice what they preach, but live out their lives in peace and simplicity. Who are the Old Order Amish and where did they come from?

The Amish Background and History

The Old Order Amish are the descendants of the Anabaptists, who originated in Europe when youthful reformers in Zurich, Switzerland outraged the city elders by rebaptizing one another in early 1525. Throughout Europe at the time, church and state were linked by infant baptism, which insured that all members of the body politic were also members of the church. “The rebaptism of adults was punishable by death” because this impinged on the sovereignty of both institutions. If adults could chose to be baptized outside the state religion, then there would be no reason why they could not withdraw their support from the state. The more radical of these religious reformers were soon under attack for

rejecting the state's authority in matters of religion. They were called "religious anarchists" because they believed in an incipient form of voluntarism. Much to the consternation of people like Martin Luther and Ulrich Zwingli, they "sought a return to the simplicity of faith and practice as seen in the early Christian Church in the Bible." The Anabaptists were known as "rebaptizers" (or second baptizers) because they believed "that the church should be a group of voluntary adults, baptized upon confession of faith, and, like the early Christian Church, separated from the world and the State." The practice of adult baptism embraced by the Anabaptists emphasized the fact that "children cannot be born into a church." They believed that the nature of the church was such that it should be "voluntary, adult, holy, full-time, caring and disciplined." Some of their other distinctive beliefs included 1) a strong Bible-centeredness, which they believed should pervade one's entire life and faith, 2) "a forgiving love in all of life" resulting in their refusal to participate in war, and 3) a "belief in separation from the world by means of nonconformity in dress and lifestyle."

Separation of church and state has always been a cornerstone of Anabaptist belief. Rulers of 16th Century Europe had a "deep fear that Anabaptists were destroying God's good society by disobeying their orders, not bringing their infants to be baptized, rejecting military service, refusing to swear the civic oath, and worshipping" apart. Anabaptists soon had a price put on their heads, and were being hunted down, tortured, and often killed for refusal to recant or give the names and locations of fellow believers. "The first martyr was drowned in 1527. Over the next few decades, thousands of Anabaptists were burned at the stake, drowned in rivers, starved in prisons, or lost their heads to the executioner's sword." The coercive kingdom of this world starkly contrasted itself with the peaceable kingdom of God, which the Anabaptists embraced. As followers of Christ they believed they "must not take the life of another human being even if it meant losing one's own life." It was more important for them to bear witness to the reality of God's love than it was to preserve their own lives, which they believed were in God's keeping.

Menno Simons (1492-1559), a Catholic priest from Holland, joined the nonviolent Anabaptists in 1536. He rejected a group of violence-prone Anabaptists who had captured the city of Munster in 1534, and began punishing those who would not be baptized as adults. His moderate leadership and prolific writings did much to unify the outlook of his Swiss brethren. "So important was his influence that within a few decades many of the northern Anabaptists were called 'Mennonites'." The Mennonite

congregations throughout Europe maintained a basic identity in belief and action until the early 1690s, when Jacob Ammann (1656?-1730?), a Swiss Mennonite bishop, felt that the mainstream Anabaptists were losing their purity. The new Christian-fellowship which he began in 1693, became known as the Amish. Ammann and his supporters believed that a member who broke with the fellowship should be severely censured and eventually completely excommunicated. This was in line with the New Testament teaching that “taught the church to discipline its members. If after long loving counsel a member in sin refused to repent, that person should be excommunicated from the fellowship until he did repent. Otherwise the fellowship would eventually have no standards.” From the Amish point of view, the purpose of excommunication was to bring a sinful member back into the fellowship, not an attempt to harm or ruin the individual.

Today, the many-subgroups of Mennonites and Amish fall into two broad categories. Merle and Phyllis Good in their book, *20 Most Asked Questions About The Amish And Mennonites* (1979), explain that there are both Old Order and New Order among the Amish and Mennonites. “Those who take their cue for decision-making primarily from their faith fellowship” are labeled Old Order, while “those who are more influenced in their primary decision-making by what the larger society thinks than by what their faith fellowship believes” are modern or New Order. Although this article specifically addresses the Old Order Amish (Amish in the context of this article means Old Order Amish), there are Old Order Mennonites and Hutterites that may share more in common with the Old Order Amish than they do with their own modern religious groups. Even the division New Order and Old Order do not divulge the extent of differences between many of the Amish sects, which range from the most conservative Old Order Swartzentrubers, to the more liberal Beachy Amish and Amish Mennonites. The Old Order Amish emerged as representatives of the traditionalist Amish in 1865, when they rejected “worldly carnivals,” fancy clothing, “pompous carriages,” gaudy household furnishings, commercial insurance, the operation of large scale businesses and warned against lax church discipline. The change-minded Amish of the post-Civil War era became known as the Amish Mennonites.

In 1992, there were about 63,000 Old Order Amish adults and maybe 70,000 Amish children to be found in twenty-two of the United States and Ontario. This Amish population comprised itself into about 900 church districts. The largest concentrations were located in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. When you find an Old Order Amishman you will be able to see and hear him! His distinct badges of identity are: his horse and buggy

transportation, his use of horses and mules for field work, his “plain dress” (no buttons or pockets), his beard and shaven upper lip, his Pennsylvania German dialect, his selective use of modern technology, and his eighth grade education. The Old Order Amish are sometimes referred to as the “House Amish,” because they have no church buildings, but rather hold their biweekly church services in their own homes. An Amishman’s intention is not “to get ahead,” but rather to get to heaven. The Amish believe “that how one lives reflects one’s Christian faith.” The Amishman’s objective in life is to remain faithful to the teachings of the New Testament. His lifestyle is based upon his religion. His goal is to “live daily a frugal, simple life of work and worship” and, by doing this, his vocation, recreation, and home life are blended into “a harmonious social pattern.” This integration weaves itself all the way throughout Amish life.

The Amish and Mutual Aid

“An important theme in Amish history is the presence of community and the practice of mutual aid.” Shunning plays a pivotal part by defining what is acceptable and what is not. The Amish have two German words, which more than anything else, characterize their outlook on shunning: *Gelassenheit*, which means “submission” to the local congregation’s will, and *Ordnung*, which stands for their code of “expected behavior.” Shunning is an effective form of social control, which in the words of one ex-Amishman “works like an electric fence around a pasture with a pretty good fence charger on it.” As Donald Kraybill has put it, “The Amish embody the virtues of a small, highly-disciplined community where social controls rest on informal sanctions meted out in a dense network of kinship ties.” The traditional Amish values – “obedience, hard work, responsibility, and integrity” – are all reinforced by the yielding of the individual to the consensus of the community. If the individual refuses to compromise, he is ostracized socially and boycotted economically.

Yet for those who stay, there is the deep-seated assurance that they will be taken care of for life, providing they make every effort to take care of themselves. The Amish believe that, if the church is faithful to its calling, commercial insurance and government welfare programs are unnecessary. Their ethic of mutual assistance flows from the Biblical emphasis on charity, taking care of one’s own, and from the spirit of *Gelassenheit*, “with its doctrine of humility, self-sacrifice, self-denial, and service to others.” By not having to rely on outsiders or the state for help, the mutual aid system of the Amish permits them to remain aloof and separate from the outside world. Mutual aid far exceeds the romanticized

barn raisings we have read about or seen in the movies. “Harvesting, quilting, births, weddings, and funerals require the help of many hands. The habits of care encompass responses to all sorts of disasters – drought, disease, death, injury, bankruptcy, and medical emergency. The community springs into action in these moments of despair – articulating the deepest sentiments of Amish life. Shunning governmental assistance and commercial insurance, the Amish system of mutual aid marks their independence as well as their profound commitment to a humane system of social security at every turn.”

Since each Old Order Amish congregation sets its own rules, it is difficult to generalize on the specific activities of each group’s mutual aid system. However, it is safe to say that the Amish aid system eliminates their need for commercial insurance. For example, “between 1885 and 1887, the Amish of Lancaster County [Pa.] formed the Amish Aid Fire and Storm Insurance Company” which is still in existence and collects “from church members according to their ability to pay.” Many congregations maintain similar cooperative systems known as Amish Aid, which cover other types of losses. Amish Liability Aid is an assessment system which collects premiums from members “to pay for tort liability awards against Amish farmers and businessmen. Amish Church Aid is yet another cooperative plan,” which covers hospitalization and medical costs. Those who suffer misfortune and are not enrolled in these cooperatives “receive assistance from church funds for the poor.” Every congregation has a deacon who is responsible for helping those in need, including those who have suffered losses resulting from their nonresistance or refusal to sue or defend themselves in court. An Amishman once summed up his outlook on life and mutual aid by writing: “[I]n our way of living, none of us is fully independent. We all need each other and try to help each other get through this life.”

The Amish View of the State

“Centuries of persecution have resulted in an almost instinctive distrust of government. The Amish realize that the hand that feeds you also controls you.” The Amish see the state as the embodiment of force, since the army and police are the most essential parts of government. Nevertheless, the Amish are law-abiding, tax-paying citizens until the laws of man conflict with the laws of God. Then they can be stubborn as a mule, refusing to compromise deeply-held beliefs, and will respectfully take a stand opposing government, even if it means prosecution, fines, imprisonment, or death. The Amish maintain a very apolitical or

“courteous disregard for the affairs of state.” They apply this strategy of non-involvement to such questions as whether a Christian should vote, serve on a jury, or hold public office. Most Amishmen believe that if they do not help elect or vote for government officials, the latter are not their representatives, and therefore they are not responsible for what these office-holding wielders of the sword do.

The Biblical admonitions to live a nonresistant life largely shape the Amish view toward lawyers and lawsuits. They studiously avoid using the courts to protect their rights or to force other people to comply with their agreed-upon promises. They will not use the law to collect unpaid debts, although the Amish have been known to stand in court in their own defense or to be represented by attorneys in such a situation. This allows them to avoid “the public role of plaintiffs seeking to vindicate their rights.” They will also use lawyers to draw up farm deeds, wills, articles of incorporation and to transfer real estate, but they will not generally initiate a lawsuit since this is grounds for excommunication from the congregation. “In the spirit of nonresistance, modeled on the suffering of Christ, the Amish traditionally have suffered injustice and financial loss rather than resort to legal force.” Not only is going to law contrary to the spirit of God, but the Amish also have their practical reasons for rejecting lawsuits. They believe they are unnecessary, always cause bitter feelings, and that as a rule both sides are losers.

The Amish do believe in paying their taxes, and they have never opposed the payment of real estate, property, school, sales, county, or federal and state income taxes. However, most Amishmen would agree that after they pay their taxes, the tax is no longer their money. Hence they have no responsibility for how the government spends the money, nor do they consider it their responsibility to tell the government how it should be used. If the Amish hold these attitudes, then why did they oppose payment of taxes to the Old Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (Social Security) program? Why didn’t they pay their taxes and refuse the benefits offered by the government?

The Amish vs. Social Security Taxes

The answer to this question is two-fold. First, as already mentioned, the Amish are adamantly opposed to participation in all commercial and governmental insurance schemes, and are just as adamant against receiving public welfare assistance. Since the very beginning of its propaganda on behalf of Social Security, the federal government has described it as an insurance program. However mistaken this nomenclature might be, the

Amish accepted it at face value and consequently viewed Social Security as the government portrayed it. Thus to the Amish, they were not refusing to pay a tax, but rather opposed to participating in an insurance program. The second reason the Amish opposed Social Security was that Amish leaders “feared that if their members paid Social Security, future generations would be unable to resist receiving the benefits for which they had already paid. Payment of taxes would be seen as participation in the system, and if paying was allowed, then how could receiving benefits be prohibited?”

The Amish first encountered the Social Security question in 1955, when it was extended to cover self-employed farmers. The Amish used many dodges to avoid complicity with the program. Some simply did not pay; others allowed the IRS to seize money from their bank accounts. Valentine Y. Byler, an Amish farmer from New Wilmington, Pa., was one of the hardliners, who closed his bank account in order to forestall IRS collection. In June 1959, the IRS filed a lien against Byler’s horses for nonpayment of his Social Security taxes. In July 1960, the IRS served him with a summons to appear in court to defend his actions. When he failed to honor the summons, he was seized by government agents in August 1960, and taken to the US District Court in Pittsburgh to answer charges of contempt. The charges were lifted when the judge realized that Byler was refusing to pay his Social Security taxes because of a firmly-held religious conviction. Finally, on April 18, 1961 Byler received national attention when IRS agents came onto his farm and seized three of his work horses for nonpayment of his taxes.

The resulting furor led to a temporary moratorium on the collection of Social Security taxes from the Amish. In September 1961, Mortimer Caplan, Commissioner of the IRS, met with a group of Amish bishops in hopes of resolving the stalemate. The Amish refused to contribute to Social Security in any way, but finally agreed to initiate a lawsuit that would determine whether or not their sect was entitled to an exemption based upon the fact that forced participation in Social Security was a violation of their religious freedom. In April 1962, Byler filed the promised suit, but soon he and the Amish bishops had second thoughts, realizing that “going to court violated their religious beliefs.” The suit was withdrawn in January 1963. Meanwhile the Amish bishops collected signatures and petitioned their representatives in Congress, pressing their case for a legislative exemption, which finally passed in 1965.

The exemption applied to self-employed workers who were members of a religious sect continually in existence since 1950, and “with

established tenets opposed to accepting the benefits of any private or public retirement plan or life, disability, or health insurance.” Each person must certify on IRS exemption form No. 4029 that he or she is conscientiously opposed to receiving government benefits such as Social Security and Medicare, “and must do so before becoming entitled to receive” those benefits. Furthermore, the worker must waive “all rights to future benefits for self and dependents under those programs.” This government-granted exemption did not cover Amish employees working for Amish or non-Amish employers, so that at least some Amishmen were still liable for the tax. In addition, since the Social Security tax was both paid by employees and employers, some Amish employers, although not responsible for Social Security tax on their own earnings from self-employment, were still liable for their employer’s share of the Social Security tax on the earnings of their employees (whether Amish or not). This oversight led to the next stage in the struggle involving the Amish and Social Security.

In the case of *United States v. Lee* (455 US 252) the Supreme Court decided, in 1982, that the burden on an Amish employer, Edwin Lee, was not unconstitutional “since the state’s overriding interest in maintaining the nationwide Social Security system justified the limitation on religious liberty.” Between 1970 and 1977, Edwin Lee employed Amish workers in his carpentry shop and on his farm. He objected to being forced to contribute the employer’s share of the Social Security tax on these employees because of the sect’s religious scruples about participation in the Social Security program. In 1978, Lee sued for an injunction blocking IRS collection efforts and asked for a refund of the amount of Social Security tax he had actually paid on these workers. The federal district court granted the injunction and refund on the basis that “requiring Lee to participate in Social Security and pay the employer tax for his workers” would be a violation of his rights to the free exercise of his religion guaranteed in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

On appeal by the government, the Supreme Court overruled the lower court’s decision, and while granting Lee’s religious freedom was violated, it held that there were more important interests at stake. The majority opinion of the Court demonstrated concern with a number of issues. First, the Court noted that the 1965 Congressional exemption applied only to self-employed individuals, not to employees or employers. Second, the Court agreed that the forced payment of taxes to or receipt of benefits from the Social Security program did violate the Amish religious beliefs and did, in fact, interfere with their freedom of religion. But the Court noted,

that “Not all burdens on religion are unconstitutional. ... [T]he State may justify a limitation on religious liberty by showing that it is essential to accomplish an overriding governmental interest.”

The court’s main concern was the smooth functioning of the tax system. This became apparent in its discussion of taxation and religious freedom. The Court observed that there was no fundamental difference between paying federal income taxes and paying the Social Security tax. Both were forced contributions to the government’s treasury. As the Court said, “There is no principled way, however, for purposes of this case, to distinguish between general taxes and those imposed under the Social Security Act. If, for example, a religious adherent believes war is a sin, and if a certain percentage of the federal budget can be identified as devoted to war-related activities, such individuals would have a similarly valid claim to be exempt from paying that percentage of the income tax. The tax system could not function if denominations were allowed to challenge the tax system because tax payments were spent in a manner that violates their religious belief. ... Because the broad public interest in maintaining a sound tax system is of such a high order, religious belief in conflict with the payment of taxes affords no basis for resisting the tax.”

Having lost the case, the Amish probably concluded that it was a lawsuit “that should never have been brought.” For one thing it violated the Amish injunction against initiating court cases. For another, it left the Amish no constitutional route to make any further challenges. Their only option was to lobby and petition for an amendment to the original Congressional exemption. In 1988, they succeeded in expanding the 1965 exemption to “include Amish employees working for Amish employers exempting both from the tax.” Consequently the only Amish who are currently liable for any Social Security tax payments are those working for non-Amish employers. “Although relatively small in number, these persons pay into the system but generally do not accept its benefits.”

Today, the National Amish Steering Committee acts as a liaison between the Old Order Amish congregations and their church districts and the Internal Revenue Service. The Committee was begun in October 1966, in response to the Amish predicament over the military draft and the Vietnam War. The Old Order Amish tolerate little church bureaucracy, and since each congregation sets its own rules, Amish-governmental relations are complicated because “the Amish have no national headquarters, national policy or national office to represent them.” Consequently, the Old Order Amish Steering Committee “represents a delicate balance between the autonomy of the church districts and the practical need of the

Amish to represent themselves in a single voice to government officials.” Even some of the more conservative Amish “continue to distance themselves from the activities of the National Amish Steering Committee. As one Swartzentruber bishop stated unequivocally, ‘We don’t join groups’.”

The IRS has taken the position that the religious exemptions to payment of Social Security taxes granted in 1965 and 1988 are not individual exemptions but rather an exemption to recognized religious groups. The law has never been tested to see what would happen to a bona fide member of such a group who refused, not only to pay the Social Security tax, but also to apply for an individual exemption. Presumably he would be considered exempt if he were a member in good standing of his congregation. Conversely, any member of the Amish who is excommunicated from or leaves the faith, automatically loses his exemption. “Entitlement to exemptions granted the Amish is determined by church membership rather than personal conviction. This was made clear in *Borntrager v. Commissioner* (1990) when an excommunicated Amishman who claimed a religious objection to Social Security was required to pay the tax.” The National Amish Steering Committee “has asked that all (excommunicated) individuals be reported to it,” presumably so they can answer IRS inquiries.

The federal government’s approach to dealing with the Amish has been to treat the Amish as a religious group, rather than to deal one on one with the individual Amishman. In the most well-known Supreme Court case (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*, 406 US 205) involving the Amish, Chief Justice Warren Burger in his majority opinion emphasized that, “The record of this case abundantly supports the claim that the traditional way of life of the Amish is not merely a matter of personal conviction but an organized group and intimately related to daily living.” Citing Henry David Thoreau as an example of an individual exercising his philosophical and personal choice, rather than a religious rationale, the Court concluded that despite the unity of Thoreau’s lifestyle and philosophy, the state had the right to force him to conform and pay his taxes. The Amish, while taking a position similar to that of Thoreau (that they would not pay a tax contrary to their convictions), were protected because their rationale was religious, and thus they were extended protection under the First Amendment.

The Amish vs. State Education

In order to better understand the Yoder case, which involved the religious rights of Amish parents to terminate their children’s education, it

is necessary to comprehend the Amish outlook on education, children, and the family. Since very few “outsiders” convert to the Amish faith, the main conduit for the preservation and extension of the religion is the children of the Amish themselves. The number of Amish would diminish rapidly if their children could not be raised to embrace the faith of their parents. The Amish believe that their children are not born into the church. “Therefore, the parents, not the church, are responsible for the children’s souls.” Child-rearing becomes the task of the parents who are responsible for the physical and spiritual condition of their children.

The ranking of duties within Amish culture is generally: first, church; second, family; and third, state. Sometime, usually between the ages of 15 and 20, before marriage, the young Amish adult chooses whether or not to join the church. “One’s first commitment is to God as manifest in the believing community, and the second is to spouse and family.” If there is a conflict of obligations, “the rules of church take precedence over family relationships. The laws of the state are obeyed insofar as they do not conflict with the laws of the church or one’s duty to family.” Consequently, the Amish would argue that their children do not belong to the state. “They belong first to God, and then to their parents, and then to the church through their parents.” The Amish take the position that “they and their children should obey the laws of the state, because government is ordained by God, but they would also contend that the Christian does not belong to the state. Therefore, if a conflict arises between the laws of the church and the laws of the state, the church’s authority take precedence.”

The main goals of Amish parents are: to raise their children to become farmers or to take up farm-related occupations; “to learn to serve God according to Amish belief; and to marry and rear their own families in the traditional Amish way of life.” The Old Order Amish are not against education as such. They do think, however, that schooling up to and including the eighth grade is sufficient to prepare their children for their tasks in life. The Amish question whether high school and college “lead to greater wisdom and Christian obedience.” What is more important they ask: Wisdom and understanding or knowledge and facts? To the Amish, learning is a way of life, not time spent in the classroom. As one Amish bishop put it, “Our children work; we feel work is the best education they can get.” He also added that he knew of no Amish youngster who had completed high school and had stayed with the Amish religion.

The Amish place great importance upon the education of their children. They want them to be as well-taught as possible. They want their elementary education second to none. Generally they prefer their children

be instructed by members of their own faith, since such teachers both understand and practice the Amish way of life. "Schools play a central role in the preservation of Amish culture. They not only reinforce Amish values but also shield youth from contaminating ideas." When Pennsylvania took the Amish to court in 1951, in the case of *Commonwealth v. Beiler*, Amish church officials issued the following statement:

We believe that our children should be properly trained and educated for manhood and womanhood. We believe that they need to be trained in the elements of learning which are now given in the elementary schools. Specifically, we believe that our children should be trained to read, to write, and to cipher. We believe our children have attained sufficient schooling when they have passed the eighth grade. We believe that when our children have passed the eighth grade that in our circumstances, way of life and religious belief, we are safeguarding their home and church training in secular and religious beliefs and faith by keeping them home under the influence of their parents. [Fisher, 16]

The early Amish settlers in 18th Century Pennsylvania generally established private subscription schools in their communities. When state-run school systems became popular in this country during the 19th Century, the Amish usually accepted and used the public schools. This was especially true in the mid-west and central states, where Amish farmers were glad to have their children in one-room school houses during some of the idle winter months. Schooling and the state were not really an issue for the Amish until the passage of compulsory attendance laws, which required that children stay in school after the age of 14. Compulsory attendance laws "at the outset may have appeared harmless enough" (because the Amish never believed they would be forced to keep their 15 and 16 year olds in school), but by the end of the 1800s some Amish realized that they had been duped. "Free" public education not only cost them in school taxes, but with the passage of attendance laws, more and more of their children were required to attend longer and longer terms at school. "The churches began to realize what they had lost when they turned education over to the state." Amishman Samuel D. Guengerich of Johnson County, Iowa noted in 1896 that, "The righteousness which counts before God is neither sought nor found in the public schools or free schools; they are intended to impart only worldly knowledge, to ensure earthly success, and to make good citizens for the state."

During the 20th Century, as the state has tried to make "good

citizens,” the Amish and the state have increasingly come into conflict. The first struggle in this century broke out after World War I in Ohio, when the Bing Act required children to attend school until age 18. In January 1922, five Amish fathers were arrested for “neglecting their children’s welfare.” Their school-age children were made wards of the court and kept in custody for two weeks at an orphanage. The distraught parents finally gave in, realizing that the most important thing was to keep their families together. The next clash occurred during the mid-1930s, when the federal government, trying to encourage public construction, authorized the federal Public Works Administration to grant money to the states for the building of consolidated elementary and high schools. In many areas this meant the demise of the one-room school house. Many, not only the Amish, resisted the closing of these schools because it meant that outside professional educators, rather than local citizenry, would control the schools. In 1937, these issues came to a head in East Lampeter Township, Pennsylvania. Not only had the Pennsylvania legislature raised the compulsory attendance age to 15, but a new consolidated school was being built. At least one Pennsylvania Dutch Amishman spent a night in jail for refusing to send his daughter to school. The Lancaster County Amish began to open their own private schools, and successfully lobbied the state legislature for a reduction of the compulsory attendance age to 14.

It was not until the mid-1950s, that the Amish encountered more school difficulties. In the meantime, they often sent their children to their own private schools, or reached agreements with local school officials to use the rural public schools, until their children completed the eighth grade. In 1955, when Pennsylvania again raised its compulsory attendance age, a compromise was worked out whereby Amish children older than 14 were able to work at home, but reported to a special vocational school one morning per week until they reached 15. In other places the Amish simply refused to allow their children to attend public schools. In the fall of 1962, officials in Buchanan County, Iowa determined that Amish schools no longer met state standards since, among other things, they employed uncertified teachers. Matters came to a head in November 1965, when school officials used a bus to collect and transport the children of recalcitrant Amish parents to public schools. Most of the children fled into surrounding corn fields or refused to accompany the officials. Iowa’s governor finally declared a moratorium on local school board interference, and national sympathy began to coalesce behind the Amish position. In 1967, the Iowa General Assembly granted state officials the power to exempt the Amish from compliance with Iowa public education standards.

One of the results of the Iowa controversy was increased national interest in the problems of religious freedom. Lutheran pastor, Reverend William C. Lindholm, became responsible for the formation of The National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom in March 1967. Meanwhile, in Kansas, Amishman LeRoy Garber was convicted under the state's compulsory attendance laws for refusing to send his daughter to public high school. The Kansas Supreme Court agreed with an earlier Pennsylvania decision of 1951, that stated, "Religious liberty includes the absolute right to believe, but only a limited right to act. ... The parent's right to believe as he chooses remains absolute. But compulsory school attendance is not a religious issue." Thus, the Kansas Court concluded that requiring high school attendance did not infringe on the right of the parents to worship or believe as they saw fit. It further stated that regardless of how sincere a religious belief might be, "an individual cannot be permitted upon religious grounds to be the judge of his duty to obey laws enacted in the public interest." The National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom tried to appeal the Kansas decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. When their petition was denied there was nothing the Committee could do. It had to wait for another test case.

The Supreme Court Decision

Litigation originating in Green County, Wisconsin in 1968 soon provided the opportunity. Many Amish parents living near New Glarus, refused to send their children to high school. One of the fathers charged with this crime was Adin Yutzy, who had moved from Iowa to escape from school officials there. The two other defendants in the case were Jonas Yoder, another Old Order Amishman, and Wallace Miller, a member of the Conservative Amish Mennonite Church. Reverend Lindholm contacted these men and urged them to allow the National Committee for Amish Religious Freedom to represent them. On January 6, 1969 "the Amish agreed to sign a power of attorney called 'Understanding and Agreement' which declared that they were 'not concerned so much about themselves as they were in allowing the committee to defend the principle of religious freedom for others'." The agreement stated that the Amish would permit their case "to be pursued to its fullest conclusion."

The men were convicted in the Green County Court in the Spring of 1969. Wisconsin's compulsory attendance law required that they send their children to public or private school until reaching age 16. Yoder (for whom the case became known) and the other men refused to send their children, ages 14 and 15, to public school after the eighth grade. The local

court held that although the tenets of their religion were violated, there was a “compelling state interest” in an educated citizenry that overruled the violation of their rights. The Wisconsin Circuit Court affirmed the conviction. The National Committee appealed and the Wisconsin Supreme Court issued a reversal, deciding in favor of the parents. The state’s Supreme Court concluded that since Amish and Mennonite schools had been so successful in preparing their students for productive lives there was no threat “to society” by limiting their education to the eighth grade. Therefore the state had no “compelling interest” in requiring attendance until age 16. The State of Wisconsin was not satisfied with this ruling and appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, which held final jurisdiction since the issue being litigated was a First Amendment question.

The U.S. Supreme Court in affirming the decision of the Wisconsin Supreme Court reasoned as follows. First, it appeared to the Court that the Amish practice of working and teaching their children after the age of 14 actually constituted a highly-successful form of “vocational” education. Second, this case involved “the fundamental interest of the parents, as contrasted with that of the State, to guide the religious future and education of their children.” Third, in analyzing the Amish religion, the Court agreed that the Wisconsin compulsory law coerced them “under threat of criminal sanction, to perform acts undeniably at odds with fundamental tenets of their religious beliefs.” Finally, the Court adduced that the State of Wisconsin made no showing that two years of additional schooling would either make Amish children more fit to live within their own culture or better American citizens. Consequently, the failure of Amish parents to send their children to school after the eighth grade was not a crime, nor a threat to the physical or mental health of the children or to “the public safety, peace, order, or welfare” of the State of Wisconsin.

Thus, the Supreme Court of the United States confirmed that “the Amish educational process is one of the most effective yet devised. Amish schools have been remarkably successful in preparing youth for productive lives within Amish society.” Not only do Amish students usually outperform their public school counterparts when they are tested in basic reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, but they are also prepared for life in other less tangible ways. The Amish place far more emphasis on character education than they do on technical education. The kind of educational wisdom the Amish seek to impart to their children is to build “character, honesty, humility, and long-suffering” patience. The Amish “have no interest in landing men on the moon,” instead “they seek only to produce good men.”

Amish Farming and Modern Technology

In the course of several centuries, the Amish have proven that their method of producing Godly men and women works. It could easily be said of the Amish that they are proof that “if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.” First, and foremost to them, they are Biblical people rooted in the soil. The family farm is the focus of their daily life, where the Amish raise their families and eke their living out of the soil. The Amish have always been noted as being some of the world’s best farmers. They make the land bloom, wherever they go, thus providing the truth of the observation that “the condition of the land, reflects the character of” the people who live upon it. Whenever they uproot and leave a place, it is usually because of political conditions imposed upon them by the authorities from the outside world, rather than because they cannot make a living from the soil.

The Amish do not engage in farming because of its economic rewards, but rather because they are guided by the Biblical injunction that men and women should earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. Farming and farming-related occupations are not only religiously motivated, but personally satisfying, and represent the best opportunities for them to raise their children in the ways of the Lord. Farming, as the Amish practice it, promotes a prudent “ecology, a moderation in financial and material ambition, frugality, attention to detail, good work habits, interdependence, neighborliness, and good common sense.” Their traditional farming background teaches them ingenuity and self-confidence. With this experience they have no need to seek their fortune in the city or to obtain a college degree to ensure success.

Even though they do not use large motorized combines and rubber-tired tractors, studies have shown that the Amish are able to harvest more per acre “with less energy consumption than” their more mechanized neighbors. The Amish farmer concentrates on doing a better job with what he already has rather than on getting more land to farm, as his modern counterpart does. The Amish have no particular desire to “get rich,” though there may be a few wealthy Amishmen. They are satisfied if they can make their living from the land, and set their own children up as farmers. They try to live so that when they retire they will be able to take care of themselves. They also expect their children to help them in their retirement, just as they have helped their children in their formative years.

Since the Amish way of life has proven itself to the Amish, they have little desire to change. Hence, they are very suspicious of and hesitant to accept the “modern” way of doing things. Nowhere is this approach more

important to them than in dealing with modern technology. “Unlike modern folk who are eager to save labor at every turn, the Amish welcome [farm] work as a wholesome way of keeping families together.” Although they still farm with horses, they have adopted and integrated beneficial technology – so long as it does not “disrupt the community or give in to human frailty.” Their use of electricity illustrates how they have accomplished this. Most Amishmen do not reject electricity anymore, but only electricity brought directly from the outer world into the home, where it may become “an umbilical cord to worldly distractions and unnecessary gadgets.” Home-generated electricity, from wind, sun or diesel motor, is generally accepted for use in the barn or workshop, where its use is not likely to lead to abuse. Thus at one stroke the Amish have eliminated television and radio from their lives, not only because they are electrical appliances, but even more importantly because they represent the modern world’s influence and intrusion into the family home.

In the case of cars, which the Amish will use but not own, they have reached “an astute cultural compromise. It protects the traditional identity and equality of the community while allowing it to flourish financially and socially.” The Amish will ride in cars, buses and transport vans in emergencies and in special circumstances. But they will not own them for fear of allowing them to “get out of hand.” The Amish not only distinguish between use and ownership, but they emphasize the importance of the dividing line between use and abuse. From the Amish perspective the refusal to permit car ownership controls the negative side effects on the community (especially disruption of the family based upon the car making it so easy for family members to travel). Their limited use of the car enhances, rather than destroys, community solidarity. There is no hypocrisy from their viewpoint in using cars, but not owning them. The community and congregation are kept together by the fact that their normal day-to-day travel is limited by the distance that a horse and buggy can drive. The Amish are free of yoking themselves to the state via driver’s license and insurance, although state requirements that they use slow-moving vehicle emblems has sometimes resulted in controversy. The Swartzentrubers, for example, reject the red triangular safety symbol as being too worldly, too loud and bright in color, and their use as showing a distrust in the protection offered by God. Whatever compromises the Amish have made with the modern world, their accommodations seem to be a reflection of their ability to make carefully-selected lifestyle changes, yet not be swept away by modern influence.

Conclusion

As the Twentieth Century has progressed, there have been more and more instances of interaction with the State, both on local and federal levels – not because the Amish have tried to force their way of life on others, but because government has insisted on intruding into every aspect of their lives. Some of the conflicts between the Amish and the State not discussed in this article involve land use regulations, building permits, vaccinations, stabling of horses within town limits, sanitation facilities, and manure pollution. Although the Amish have sometimes been successful in obtaining legislative exemptions or judicial decisions which favor their way of life, they should certainly be aware that such privileges granted them are just that. Constitutional mandates and man-made-law are all the same. The Constitution may be amended and laws may be easily changed. How the Amish will fare under the new universal health care plan remains to be seen.

Although the Amish have been characterized as largely voluntaryist, their history offers a few aberrations. They have never objected to the applications of compulsory education laws to the first eight grades, nor do they view taxation as theft. They accept the Biblical admonition to render unto Caesar. Although they are ready, willing and able to stand up to the State when it conflicts with God's law, they believe the State is God-ordained and to be resisted only when it violates Scripture. While the Amish and voluntaryist both oppose the State, it is not always for the same reasons. Some voluntaryists might find the Amish lifestyle strange and backward, but it is necessary to remember that it is their basic stance on non-violence and mutualism that unites them.

The Amish exude a basic common sense about life in the real world that is refreshing to us moderns. They know which values are important, and they pursue those values in their own lives. Amish society emphasizes "informal learning through doing, a life of goodness rather than a life of intellect, wisdom rather than technical knowledge, community welfare rather than competition, and separation rather than integration with a contemporary worldly society." Yet for all the praise due the Amish, they are not a perfect people. "Marriages sour, and greed and pride lift their heads, just as in any other community. It is easy to romanticize Amish life as an idyllic alternative to modern ways," forgetting that they are facing the same oppressive state and human problems as everyone else. Nevertheless, the words written by John Hostetler in 1952, still ring true:

Their mission to America as apostles of peace is to bring healing to human society and to witness to a higher way of life. They do not entertain any utopian ideas about possessing the whole world or converting it. ... [They believe that] [t]he foundations of any civilization depend on the moral quality of the people living in it. Where better can such virtues as neighborliness, self-control, good will, and cooperation be found than in small communities? A civilization will thrive wherever these qualities are found, and it will break down wherever they cease to exist. Perhaps the modern hurried, worried and fearful world could learn something from the Amish.

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(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 67, pp. 1-7, April 1994)

For Me, That's Enough!

By Allan Carlson

My response to those that claim that the family could not survive under a regime of freedom “would point to scattered groups in America which, through some amazing historical quirk or some political miracle, still inhabit one of our few remaining ‘zones of liberty’ and which survive under such an ‘impossible’ regime. One unexpected but interesting example would be the Amish, who beat off government challenges to their special, limited educational practices (namely, schooling only by Amish teachers and only through the eighth grade), who make heavy use of child labor, and who avoid Social Security (as well as government farm welfare) out of principle. Not only have the Amish managed to survive in an industrial, market milieu; they have thrived. Their families are three times the size of the American average. When facing fair competition, their farms turn profits in ‘good times’ and ‘bad.’ Their savings rate is extraordinarily high. Their farming practices, from any environmental standard, are exemplary, marked by a committed stewardship of the soil and avoidance of chemicals and artificial fertilizers. During a time when the number of American farmers has fallen sharply, Amish farm colonies have spread widely, from a base in southeastern Pennsylvania to Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Tennessee, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

It is probably true that relatively few contemporary Americans would choose to live like the Amish, given a true freedom of choice. Then again, no one can be quite sure what America would look like, if citizens were actually freed from the bureaucratic rule over families that began to be imposed here, over one hundred years ago, starting with the rise of the mandated public school. I have absolutely no doubt, though, that under a true regime of liberty, families would be stronger, children more plentiful, and men and women happier and more content. For me, that’s enough.”

—Allan Carlson,

“What Has Government Done to Our Families?”, No. 13, *Essays In Political Economy*, (The Ludwig von Mises Institute, Nov. 1991).

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 67, p. 8, April 1994)

The Family vs. The State

By Allan Carlson

Healthy American families are subjected to the real abuse of state investigations into their structure and character, a special kind of terror unique to the sentimental totalitarianism of late 20th century America.

State schools serve as the primary instruments of scrutiny and indoctrination. From the earliest grades, children are taught by public officials to be suspicious of their parents' touches and told how to register complaints over parents' actions with public officials. Federally funded School-Based Multi-Disciplinary Teams enter schools to ferret out "abusing families." These cadres of social workers and psychologists have the power to examine a family's source of income, history, living conditions, attitudes, self-image, spousal relations, impulse control, and degree of community involvement. Those falling short of federal standards face therapy, loss of children, and formal criminal charges.

Indeed, it is primarily through the state's schools that *parens patriae* continues its drive to displace the autonomous family. As Princeton sociologist Norman Ryder has conclusively shown, government schools serve as the prime instrument for communicating a "state morality" and a "state mythology" designed to subvert the bonds and sense of continuity of each family. "Families" are allowed to exist only as they become agents of the state, dutifully providing room and board to the state's children.

G.K. Chesterton explained, decades ago, what was at stake here. "The ideal for which the family stands... is liberty," he wrote. "It is the only ...institution that is at once necessary and voluntary. It is the only check on the state that is bound to renew itself as eternally as the state, and more naturally than the state."

—Allan Carlson,
"Uncle Sam's Child," *Libertarian Familist*, Winter 1993, Box 4826,
El Paso, TX 79914.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 69, p. 2, August 1994)

Section V

A Potpourri of Hope for America

This last section of our anthology is a bit of a catch-all for articles that don't fit elsewhere. It also will serve as a fitting conclusion to our effort to look at voluntarism in education versus educational statism.

We've included an article about the "crazy" English language, a traditional subject of study for many homeschoolers. The English language, as you shall see, is an example of one of the world's longest uninterrupted experiments in voluntarism. We've also selected an article about Freedom School, Robert LeFevre's attempt between 1957 and 1967 to establish a vehicle for libertarian understanding and education. Several other articles deal with the impact of individuals on the world around them: from the Hopi Indians insistence on "strong and deliberate [and prayerful] persistence in one's own way," to the lone man facing Chinese army tanks in Tiananmen Square in 1989, to making everyday farms, families, and businesses work with grace and dignity. It is all in our state of mind - the attitude toward life and living that we chose to embrace everyday (and this is a choice that we make each and everyday of our lives).

A number of articles included here deal with our basic methodology and strategy. In "What Are We For?- What Do We Believe?" and "What Is Our Plan?" we observe that character building, the building of morally strong individuals, is the essential basis for human happiness, as well as the prerequisite of a better society. The ideas of personal integrity, honesty, productive work, fulfillment of one's promises, and the practice of non-retaliation set the stage for social harmony and abundance. To the question, "What can we do to make this world a better place?" we come down strongly on the side of improvement of the individual. It is the individual and only the individual that directs and controls the use of human energy. The world will change only as individuals change themselves into better persons. A better world begins with you and with your children, whom we encourage you to homeschool (whether you do now or will chose to do so in the future).

As you conclude this section, we cannot but help repeat a few lines from our introduction. The quiet or patient way of changing society does not involve politics, or petitions, or other people. It means concentrating upon bettering our own character, and that of our children by giving them an example to emulate. As the individual units of society change, the improvement in society will take care of itself. If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself.

Freedom School II

By Carl Watner

The decade from 1957 through 1967 was unique in the history of individual liberty because it was witness to the existence of The Freedom School in Palmer Lake, Colorado. The school idea was the brainchild of Robert LeFevre. The reality of the school was made possible through his dedication, as well as the effort of four “pioneer” libertarians who assisted him: his wife, Loy, and three long-time friends, Ruth Dazey, Marji Llewellyn, and Edith Shank. The purpose of this paper is to briefly sketch the history of the original Freedom School and outline its successes and failures. The reason for doing this is the author’s belief that now is the time for the creation of a Freedom School II. An insight into the nature and operation of the earlier Freedom School should bolster such a project if undertaken today.

The idea of the first Freedom School originated with Bob in the very late 1940’s or early 1950’s, during the time that he was thinking through the issues of the relationship between limited government and human freedom. After World War II, he had been engaged in business in San Francisco. His confrontations with local government made him realize that no matter how limited government was there was still an irreconcilable contradiction between government coercion and taxation and the right of the individual to control his or her own property. During the 1950 primaries, Bob had run as a Republican candidate for Congressman in the 14th District in Los Angeles. His political career had been disillusioning. Eventually he came to the realization that all government and tyranny are grounded on general public acceptance. Thus public education and teaching people to think for themselves were the most crucial means of challenging governmental legitimacy.

Bob had discussed his ideas for a freedom school both with Leonard Read, the founder of the Foundation for Economic Education in New York, and F.A. “Baldy” Harper, a one-time Cornell University professor who worked with Read. They all agreed that the creation of such a school was desirous, but neither Read nor Harper believed that such a project would be financially feasible. Where would sufficient money come from to sustain such a school? Bob rejected their conclusion because he had a dream. That dream was to become reality in the years to come.

In 1954 Bob’s mother died, leaving him some \$4000 in her estate.

With that money as down payment, in late Fall 1955, he purchased 320 acres of mostly mountainous land in the Rampart Range of the Rockies. Here he and his companions lived and began the work needed to create a modest but attractive school campus. His employer, Harry Hoiles, the publisher of the Colorado Springs *Gazette Telegraph*, permitted him to devote time to the school without a reduction in pay. His wife Loy became housekeeper and eventually facilities manager, while Marji, Ruth, and Edith held outside jobs to supplement the school's income. Eventually Marji was to become the school's full-time librarian. Ruth became the school's secretary and administrator, and Edith its bookkeeper and accountant. Bob, with no college degree or teacher training, became the school's premier instructor.

1956 was spent constructing the rustic log cabins used as permanent staff residences and classrooms. Bob never really had the money to create a school. The land was mortgaged from the start. Harry Hoiles graciously loaned him \$7000 to construct the cabins. In June 1957, the first official classes were conducted. Students, men and women over 16 years old, enrolled in two-week sessions throughout the summer and fall to study the nature of man and the nature of government. At first visiting teachers, many of them the outstanding libertarians of the late 1950's and early 1960's, were invited to spend weekends at the campus delivering lectures. Later, when the school and accommodations grew, week-long lectures by outside visitors were offered. Read, Harper, and others, like Rose Wilder Lane, Frank Chodorov, and Percy Greaves, were all associated with the school from its inception.

What made the school attractive and how did it draw students? First of all, the school's location in Colorado gave the impression that the stay at the school was to be something like a vacation at a dude ranch. As the school grew, it eventually acquired a string of 23 riding horses, which lent a romantic aura to the school's western image. As Bob has written elsewhere, "People came to enjoy themselves and they did so. The food was 'tops.' The surroundings were glorious. The staff was marvelous and well-trained." The library eventually housed nearly 10,000 books. The school had tests, personal interviews, personal evaluations; "the personal touch at all times to let each person grow aware of how important he or she was and how important their own self-control remained."

In short, the leisurely pace and school-like setting allowed time to understand the fundamentals of freedom. The amenities, the classroom discussions, the exams, the library, all enhanced the students' desire to think for themselves. "Without having been trained (except as an actor),

LeFevre tuned in to where the minds of his students were when they came. He met them there. He employed the Socratic method (without knowing what it was), and offered illustrations and humor to make his points. To the extent possible, the tempo was relaxed. He encouraged discussion and debated with one and all. He was patient, always giving the other party plenty of time to climb on the bandwagon.”

In his autobiography, LeFevre describes his early view of the school. He saw it as a ten-year experiment: to see if they could get 100 students a year for each of 10 years. At that time, LeFevre asked, “How many really consistent people are there in the country now favoring the position that I recommend?” Not many. Most people only want free enterprise at tax time and then demand government assistance the rest of the year. LeFevre’s idea was to offer a logically consistent case for an all voluntary society, one where no coercive government existed. The voluntarist alternative, that people should be self-responsible, should exercise self-control, and provide either cooperatively or competitively all the protection services that they themselves required (without resort to taxation or theft) was the gospel according to LeFevre.

From its inception, the Freedom School exhibited success. As it slowly attracted students its reputation grew, and by the time of its demise the school had exposed several thousand students to the idea of “liberty as the mother, not the daughter of order.” Despite its growth, the school was never financially secure. For the most part it experienced a hand-to-mouth existence, that depended primarily on contributions which LeFevre raised himself. Only about one-third of the students paid their own way: the others were supplied with scholarships out of contributors’ funds. As LeFevre describes it, “There was no money. There never was any. Certainly, I raised a great deal. [His efforts during the life of the school brought in close to two million dollars.] But the effort began by going into debt. Then we worked frantically to meet the payments on the debt and to bring in, additionally, all the funds necessary to keep the operation afloat. The financial sword of Damocles hung over my head every instant.”

The turning point came during the summer of 1965. Within a few hours, a monstrous storm delivered some 14 inches of rainfall to the Colorado Springs area. Water damage and mudslides destroyed more than \$150,000 of improvements on campus. Although LeFevre was able to raise an emergency fund of \$ 80,000, he had to borrow the rest from a local bank. The school was rebuilt, bigger and better. At the same time, a number of operational decisions which LeFevre had made in the past conspired to pull the school down. First, LeFevre had reduced the two-

week sessions to one week, in order to placate businessmen who protested they could not afford to send people to the school for two weeks. Secondly, LeFevre was faced with the tension of running a governmentally tax-exempt school which favored free enterprise in all areas. If the school could not run itself on free enterprise principles, how could it seriously advocate those principles for anyone else? [1] Thirdly, LeFevre began to believe that it was necessary to bring the school “into the ‘main stream’ of public interest by enlarging the curricula and offering courses in economics, history, philosophy and kindred disciplines so as to attract graduate students as candidates for advanced degrees. This (which took place during 1966 and the early part of 1967) was the final major error.”

Consequently, the school was faced with a financial disaster because its costs were mounting, while its income plummeted. The graduate program had to be terminated when the bank informed LeFevre that no further loans would be made. No matter how LeFevre figured it, the school had to cease operations in Colorado. It owed approximately half a million dollars on the land (some 200 acres adjacent to the school had been purchased in the mid 1960's) and on contingent liabilities and obligations. Eventually the campus was sold and all the bills were paid. In 1968, the Freedom School, which by that time was known as Rampart College, moved to Santa Ana, California, where it managed to barely exist in truncated form for another five or six years.

Now why does the author of this article believe that, 15 years after the demise of the Freedom School, it is time for Freedom School II? The answer to that question is largely premised on the view that education is the most moral and effective way to promote libertarian ideas. Politically speaking the last decade has been disastrous for libertarians because people were led to believe that electoral politics could change things around. No intellectual foundation was ever laid. Had the money spent on trying to win elections been spent on a Freedom School, the educational efforts would have resulted in many thousands of people becoming well-informed and self-disciplined individualists. The political process will never accomplish this: nor will violent revolutionary attempts to alter the structure of government or society succeed, because attitudes and ideas have to be changed first. When the Freedom School was operating it contributed enormously to the comprehension that thousands of people had for the meaning, significance and implications of human liberty. “More persons were taught personal self-discipline, self-control, personal responsibility, and independence than at any other time in this century.”

The existence and creation of an all-voluntary society depends on

there being sufficient numbers of informed, thinking people who accept personal responsibility for their own existence and who refuse to resort to violence in any form. The person who convinces himself that voluntarism is humane, moral and practical remains convinced forever. As LeFevre has written, "From this procedure there can be no backlash. More and more persons, self-motivated and self-controlled, simply stop engaging in the existing social devices which impose on others. They break their ties with the existing political structures; not by violence, not by trying to obtain majorities or using force, but by understanding and then thinking differently about the whole area of human relationship."

The educational process is a very slow one because "the feedback loop in ideological endeavors is a very long one. But if the job is well done, the loop closes in time. Ideas grow best when they are allowed to flourish on their own. They often grow wild, but that never detracts from their value. Freedom is not an end to a great effort, it is the method that must be employed in all efforts." Freedom School II and other efforts that it would spawn are part of that method. If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself. There is no short cut to the fact that "freedom depends upon education and understanding. Each person frees him or herself. When that is done without inhibiting others, only then does that person add to the total amount of freedom in the world."

Endnotes:

[1] Competitive businesses do not usually ask their customers for contributions. They normally offer goods or services which their clients prefer instead of keeping their money. There was certainly nothing unlibertarian about the Freedom School asking for and accepting voluntary contributions. In fact people who made contributions were demonstrating that they would rather live in a country where a Freedom School existed, rather than in a country where one did not exist. Although LeFevre philosophically urged tax exemption for every person and business, the school found it difficult to survive in a governmentally distorted educational market without providing some way for its patrons to deduct or expense their support of the school from their tax liabilities.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 14, pp. 2-4, February 1985)

What We Are For? – What Do We Believe?

Past editorials and articles have made it clear that *The Voluntaryist* is unique in that it is the only regularly published libertarian publication to advocate non-State, pro-free market attitudes coupled with an anti-electoral stance and a predilection for nonviolent means. In fact, we could probably argue that *The Voluntaryist* is the only journal in the world that consistently upholds individualist anarchism (by which we mean self-government), rejection of electoral politics, and the advocacy of non-violent means to achieve social change. This after all is what we signify when we use the term ‘voluntaryist’.

The Voluntaryist is seldom, if ever, concerned with personalities; but we are concerned with ideas. Our interest is in the enduring aspects of libertarianism. Among these ideas we would include the concept that taxation is theft; that the State is an inherently invasive institution, a coercive monopoly; that war is the health of the State; that power corrupts (especially State power); that there is no service demanded on the free market that cannot be provided by market methods; and that the delineation and implementation of property rights are the solution to many of our social and economic ills. Nor to be overlooked is our insistence on the congruence of means and ends; that it is means which determine ends, and not the end which justifies the means.

Voluntaryist thinking forms a link in the chain of ideas started many centuries ago. We have reviewed some of the significant sources of radical libertarian thought in Issue 25. Our roots are to be found in antiquity, when moral thinkers realized that character building, the building of morally strong individuals, was the essential basis of human happiness - as well as the prerequisite of a better society. Self-responsibility was inextricably linked to self-control. The ideas of personal integrity, honesty, productive work, fulfillment of one’s promises and the practice of non-retaliation set the stage for social harmony and abundance, wherever and whenever these two attributes of social life were to surface in the world’s civilizations.

These ideas helped set the stage for the voluntaryist outlook on means and ends. A person could never use evil means to attain good ends. For one thing, such an attempt would never work. It would be impractical and self-defeating. For another thing, it would be inconsistent with personal integrity. A person would not resort to lying and cheating, for example, even if he or she mistakenly thought such base means could result in good ends. Evil

means, like these, would always be rejected by an honest person.

Impure means must lead to an impure end since means always come before ends. The means are at hand, closest to us. They dictate what road we shall set out on and thus eventually determine our destination. Different means must inevitably lead to different destinations for the simple reason that they lead us down different paths. Thus it is that voluntaryists reject electoral politics as well as revolutionary violence. Neither of these methods could ever approximate voluntaryist goals - the ideal of a society of free individuals. Nor do either bring about a change or improvement in the moral tone of the people who comprise it.

Voluntaryists have a clear understanding of the nature of power -what we have labeled "the voluntaryist insight." We know that the State, like all human institutions, depends on the consent and cooperation of its participants. We also know that we are self-controlling individuals, with ultimate responsibility for what we do. We cannot be compelled to do anything against our will, though we may suffer the consequences for a refusal to obey the State or any other gangster who holds a gun at us. The State may do what it pleases with our bodies, but it cannot force us to change our ideas. We may lose our liberty behind jail bars (liberty being the absence of coercion or physical restraints), but we cannot lose our freedom (freedom being the inner spirit or conscience) unless we give it up ourselves.

Voluntaryism offers a moral and practical way for advancing the cause of freedom. It rests on a belief in the efficacy of the free market and on a historic and philosophic antagonism to the State. It rests on an understanding of the inter-relatedness of means and ends, and on a belief that "if one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself." We are pro-free market, anti-State, nonviolent, and anti-electoral. This, in a few short phrases, is what we are for; what we believe.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 29, p. 2, December 1987)

What Is Our Plan?

At a recent one day seminar at Freedom Country, the question was asked: “What can a person do to make this world a better place?” No single answer was articulated, but two different conceptual approaches were apparent. The responses of the participants could be categorized according to whether or not they believed

a. a better society depends on better individuals

or

b. better individuals cannot be raised until we have a better society (where, for example, educational services are improved, child abuse no longer exists, etc.).

In other words, which comes first – the chicken or the egg? Better individuals or the better society?

Nineteenth century reformers, especially the non-resistants and abolitionists, grappled with this problem. How were they to advocate the abolition of slavery? Should they wait for Congress to abolish slavery or should they try to eliminate the vestiges of slavery from their daily lives? Should they be immediatists or gradualists? Should they use legislative means or moral suasion? Should they vote or hold office or should they denounce the U.S. Constitution as a tool of the slaveholders?

Those nineteenth century thinkers whom I would label voluntaryist (such as Henry David Thoreau, Charles Lane, William Lloyd Garrison, Henry Clarke Wright, and Edmund Quincy in pre-Civil War days, and Nathaniel Peabody Rogers) all believed that a better society only came about as the individuals within society improved themselves. They had no plan, other than a supreme faith that if one improved the components of society, societal improvement would come about automatically. As Charles Lane once put it, “Our reforms must begin within ourselves.” Better men must be made to constitute society. For “society taken at large is never better or worse than the persons who compose it, for they in fact are it.”

The Garrisonians, for example, were opposed to involvement in politics (whether it be office-holding or participating in political parties) because they did not want to sanction a government which permitted slavery. Their opposition to participation in government also stemmed from their concern with how slavery was to be abolished. To Garrison’s way of thinking it was as bad to work for the abolition of slavery in the wrong way as it was to work openly for an evil cause. The end could not justify the means. The anti-electoral abolitionists never voted, even if they

could have freed all the slaves by the electoral process. Garrison's field of action was that of moral suasion and not political action. He thought that men must first be convinced of the moral righteousness of the antislavery cause. Otherwise it would be impossible to change their opinions, even by the use of political force.

Given this approach, it seemed that the anti-electoral abolitionists had no real strategy. In rebutting this criticism, Nathaniel Peabody Rogers, in a September 6, 1844 editorial in the *Herald of Freedom*, spelled out his answer to the question: "What is your Plan?"

[T]o be without a plan is the true genius and glory of the anti-slavery enterprise. The mission of that movement is to preach eternal truths, and to bear an everlasting testimony against the giant falsehoods which bewitch and enslave the land. It is no part of its business to map out its minutest course in all time to come, - to furnish a model for all the machinery that will ever be set in motion by the principle it is involving. The plan and the machinery will be easily developed and provided, as soon as the principle is sufficiently aroused in men's hearts to demand the relief of action.

What is the course of action these abolitionists have pursued? How have they addressed themselves to their mighty work? ...They were not deterred by finding themselves alone facing a furious and innumerable host of enemies. They felt that the Right was on their side, and they went forward in the calm certainty of a final victory. They began, and as far as they have remained faithful, they continue to perform their mission by doing the duty that lieth nearest to them. They soon discovered that Slavery is not a thing a thousand miles removed, but that it is intertwined with all the political, religious, social and commercial relations in the country. ...In obedience to the highest philosophy, though perhaps not knowing it to be such, they proceeded to discharge their own personal duties in this regard-to bear an emphatic and uncompromising testimony against Slavery, and to free their own souls from all participation in its blood-guiltiness. They laid no far-reaching plans,...but obeyed that wisdom which told them that to do righteousness is the highest policy, and that to pursue such a straight-forward course would bring them soonest to the desired goal. Their question was not so much how shall we abolish Slavery? as, how shall we best discharge our duty?

Edmund Quincy in a February 24, 1841 editorial by the same title, in *The Non-Resistant*, pointed out that social institutions are but the projection or external manifestation of the ideas and attitudes existing in people's minds. "Change the ideas, and the institutions instantly undergo a corresponding change." In words reminiscent of Bob LeFevre's emphasis on self-control, Quincy went on to write, that:

There is a sense in which the kingdoms of the world are within us. All power, authority, consent, come from the invisible world of the mind. ... External revolutions, accomplished by fighting, have in general affected little but a change of masters ...

We would try to bring about a mightier revolution by persuading men to be satisfied to govern themselves according to the divine laws of their natures, and to renounce the [attempt to govern others] by laws of their own devising. Whenever men shall have received these truths into sincere hearts, and set about, the business of governing themselves, and cease to trouble themselves about governing others, then whatever is vicious and false in the existing institution will disappear, and its place be supplied by what is good and true.

We do not hold ourselves obliged to abandon the promulgation of what we believe to be truths because we cannot exactly foretell how the revolution which they are to work, will go on, or what will be the precise form of the new state which they bring about. ... A reformer can have no plan but faith in his principles. He cannot foresee wither they will lead him but he knows that they can never lead him astray. A plan implies limitations and confinement. Truth is illimitable and diffusive. We only know that Truth is a sure guide, and will take care of us and of herself, if we will but follow her.

The Voluntaryist essentially upholds the same ideas as these nineteenth century thinkers. We advocate moral action, rather than politics and elections because moral suasion lays the axe at the root of the tree. We believe that moral action alone is sufficient to nullify State legislation. Legislation is not needed to abolish other legislation. Harmful and unjust political laws should simply be ignored and disobeyed. We do not need to use the State to abolish the State, any more than we need to embrace war to fight for peace. Such methodology is self-contradictory, self-defeating, and inconsistent.

Difficult as it is to totally divorce ourselves from the State, each of us

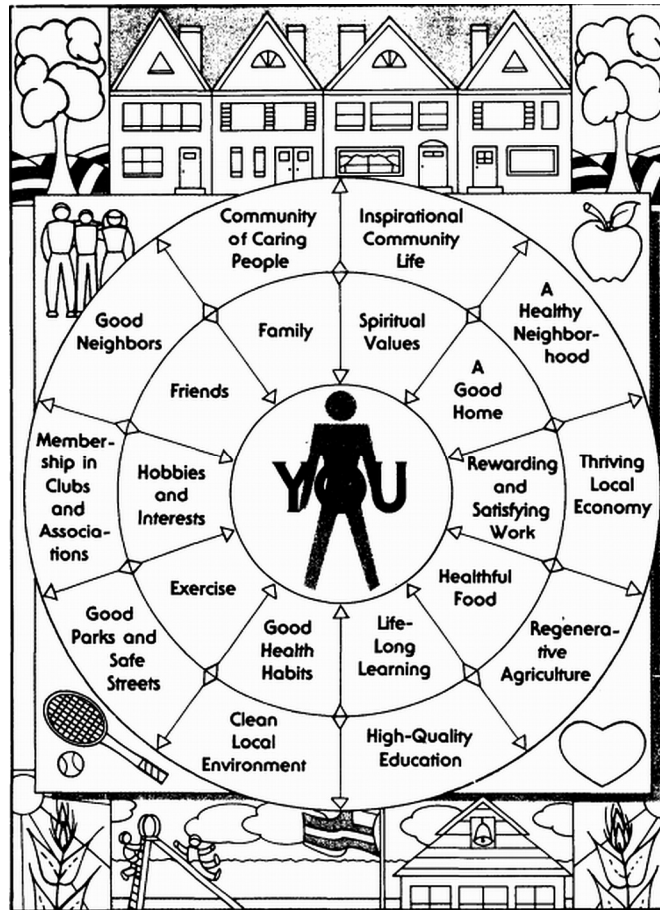
must draw the line for him or herself as to how and to what extent we will deal with statism, whether it be driving on government roads, paying federal income taxes, using government “funny” money, or the post office. Several things are imperative, though. We must support ourselves on the free market, never taking up government employment. We must also remain uninvolved in politics, refusing to vote or run for public office. We must never accept a government handout or government funds (even when justified on the pretext that the money was stolen from you or that you were forced to contribute to a government program. No one is forcing you to accept money which the government has stolen.)

In short, what we are advocating is that every one take care of him or herself and care for the members of his or her family, when they need help. If this were done, there would be no justification for any statist legislation. Competent individuals and strong families, particularly the three generation living unit, are some of the strongest bulwarks against the State. (And it should be remembered that families need not be limited by blood lines. Love, which brings outsiders into the family, is often more important than blood ties.)

If people would only realize that it is the individual and only the individual that directs the use and control of human energy, the world would change as individuals change themselves. The chart which we display here is described by *Prevention* magazine (April 1987) as a prescription for regenerative living. Change starts with you and me! This means good family, friends, healthy living habits, lifelong learning, and rewarding and satisfying work; which in turn lead to good neighbors, a good community, a thriving economy, and a natural environment. That pretty much sums it up. What is our plan? - a better world begins with a better you!

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 29, p. 2-3, December 1987)

What Is Our Plan?



Voluntaryism and the English Language

By Carl Watner

English Is a Crazy Language

Language is not only one of mankind's oldest social and cultural phenomena, but, as George Orwell and others have pointed out, it is also one of the most subtle and powerful means of social control. The development of language, its evolution, and its transmission by conquest, assimilation, migration, and other ethnic movement, is a complex and enigmatic process. Viewed historically, the evolution of the English language is one of the best examples of voluntaryism. English is clearly a "crazy" language just because no one person or group of people ever sat down and decided to invent it. It is one of those institutions which, as Friedrich Hayek has described, is "the result of human action but not human design." Language, like money, falls in the realm of "the spontaneous order" because by its very nature it is a growing, evolving thing. It may be studied and cultivated, but it may not be fixed without stifling and killing it. The balance of this article will present an overview of the history of the English language (and some of its related areas, such as English dictionaries and grammatical rules) in an effort to demonstrate how one of the world's longest uninterrupted experiments in voluntaryism has proceeded.

The tone for this stage of our inquiry is taken from Richard Lederer's new book, *Crazy English* (1989). Well into the book (but after many, many examples of crazy English), he asks us to consider the foreign couple who decided to name their firstborn daughter the most beautiful English word they had ever heard. They named the child Diarrhea. Despite this faux pas, the fact is that English is probably the most widely spoken language in the history of our planet. That, however, does not keep it from being full of paradoxes and vagaries. How can a darkroom be lit, silverware be plastic, or tablecloths be made of paper? Why do we drive on the parkway but park in the driveway? Why does your nose run, but your feet smell? Why do we fill out a form by filling it in, or chop a tree down and then chop it up? Why do alarm clocks go off by going on?

The English language is a crazy "quilt" because it was created by great numbers of people over the course of nearly two thousand years. No one

sat down with the purpose of inventing it. Consequently, our language reflects the creativity and asymmetry of the large part of the human race that uses it. One out of seven people in the world speaks, writes, or reads it; half the world's books, and the majority of international telephone calls are made in English. Eighty percent of computer text is stored in English, sixty percent of the world's radio programs are in English, and seventy percent of all international mail is written in English. Perhaps one cause for this widespread usage of English is that it has the largest vocabulary of any tongue on earth. *The Oxford English Dictionary* documents over 500,000 words, of which nearly one-half are still in use. By contrast, French speakers have access to less than a third of that number, while Russians make do with only a quarter. Primitive peoples, in comparison, make do with vocabularies of about 20,000 words.

The Origins and Roots of English

From where do our words come? They come from almost everywhere. Robert Claiborne, in his handbook of word origins (*The Roots of English*, [1989]), cites the following examples:

“Alcohol” and “alkali” come from Arabic; “amok” from Malay; “bizarre” from the mysterious Basque tongue of northern Spain. “Coach” comes from a Hungarian town; “parka” from the Samoyedes of the northern Urals; “skunk” and “chile” from the Native Americans; and “taboo” from Tahitian. “Okay” was brought into English by slaves from West Africa; “corral” by Mexican cattlemen – who learned it from Portuguese sailors, who learned it from the Hottentot herders of southern Africa.

But though English has plundered the whole earth for words, such exotic birds of passage account for only a small fraction of its oversized lexicon.

The large majority of English words have come from three root sources. These are: Primitive Germanic; Latin and its descendants, the Romance languages; and Greek. The first of these, Primitive Germanic, is the ancestor of English, as well as modern German, Dutch, Yiddish, and the Scandinavian tongues. It is responsible for giving us words for body parts (arm, head, eye, brain), family terms (brother, sister, etc.), many of our everyday verbs (have, be, come, go, etc.), and every one of our English pronouns (I, you, she, he, etc.). Latin, the language of the Roman empire, has given us French, Spanish, and Italian, and through these sister languages, has contributed more than half of the words in the English language. The third root of English is the Greek language, which was

spoken in the eastern Mediterranean during the Roman era. Greek indirectly influenced English by way of Latin, but also had a direct effect by being the source of most of our medical and scientific vocabularies.

The interesting feature of these three roots is that they, themselves, can be traced back to a common origin. At least half of the languages spoken today (mostly those in the western world, including the Indian sub-continent) can be traced back to a remote ancestor language. This common taproot has contributed at least 80% of the words in English. Since this parent language was never written down, for ages it was lost to scholars. Its modern rebirth began with Sir William Jones, a man of letters and an English judge in India during the late 18th Century. Jones was interested in Sanskrit, and also knew Latin and Greek. As his linguistic studies progressed, he could not help but notice many similarities among the three. The Sanskrit *trayas* (three), the Latin *tres*, and the Greek *trias* all resembled one another, as did the Sanskrit *sarpa* (snake), and the Latin *serpens*. The Sanskrit word for god, *devas*, was close to the Latin *divus* (divine). Sir William found hundreds of other parallels, which led him to conclude that there had been some “universal” language, which later philologists termed Indo-European. Since then, scholars have identified some of its oldest components: Sanskrit, Hittite, Old Latin, Gothic, and Old English.

The ancient Indo-Europeans probably lived in the area of the valley of the middle Danube and flourished in the centuries after 6000 B.C. They were farmers, raising grain crops, vegetables, and domesticated animals. Archeological evidence indicates that they were among the first people to use animal power to till their fields. By 3500 B.C., groups of Indo-European migrants had spread all over northwestern Europe, and by 2000 B.C. they had conquered what we now refer to as Greece, Italy, and the rest of the Mediterranean basin. As they fanned out toward Asia Minor and India, they took their native language with them, but their tongue split into dialects, which eventually evolved into the distinct languages, some of which were the direct precursors of our modern day English.

The History of English

The English language of today has been in the development stages for over a score of centuries. The political and social events that have affected the English peoples in their natural life have also affected their language. Celtic (a kin of modern Welsh and Breton) was probably the first Indo-European language spoken in England, around 2000 B.C. Several centuries later, the Norseman conquered a large part of northern and central Britain. Being outnumbered by the natives, they learned their language, though

there existed a considerable infusion of Norwegian words. Similarly, Latin was introduced when Britain became a province of the Roman empire during the first century A.D. Many new words, particularly in the fields of warfare, trade, cookery, and building were contributed by the new invaders.

With the decline of the Roman empire, groups of Germanic tribes living along the North Sea were able to migrate into the island of Britain. They brought their own Germanic speech ashore during the invasions of the 5th and 6th Centuries, A.D. The migrants were drawn from three main tribes – the Angles, the Saxons, and the Jutes – and the language they spoke was called Old English. The Christianization of England at the end of the 6th Century A.D. and the settlement of most of England and Scotland by the Anglo-Saxons resulted in further changes to the language of the native inhabitants. The island's isolation allowed Old English to evolve away from its West Germanic sister languages of the continent. Old English, which lasted from about 450 A.D. until about 1150 A.D., began to develop regional dialects of its own. They were West Saxon, Kentish, Mercian, and Northumbrian, and differed from each other mostly in pronunciation.

The end of the Old English period was marked by the Norman Conquest of 1066. This invasion of Frenchmen had a substantial effect on the English language, more than any other event in its history. Since the new governing class in both church and state were made up of the new conquerors, their effect on the native language was far out of proportion to their numbers. By the time their assimilation was complete, some two centuries later, English was greatly changed in both its form and vocabulary.

By the end of the Middle English period (1150-1500), the influence of French was on the wane. One of the effects of the 100 Years War (1337-1453) was to bring about the decline of French, which, after all, was still the language of an enemy people. At the same time, the appearance of the Black Death ensured the economic importance of the native laboring class (workers were in great demand due to the shortage of hands caused by the plague), and with it the importance of the English language which they still spoke. Nevertheless, there were many important changes in the grammatical structure of English as well as a considerable transference of words from French to Middle English.

The Modern English of today, which we recognize as Standard English, dates from about the beginning of the 1500s. The dialects which had developed at the end of the Old English period and which continued to

evolve during the following centuries became dominated by the language spoken in the East Midland district, in which London, the political capital and commercial center of the country, was located. The district itself was centrally located between northern and southern England and was the most populous and most agriculturally important region of England. Furthermore, the presence of the new universities of Oxford and Cambridge contributed to the rise of Standard English. This became known as the London standard. The press became another powerful force in promoting a standard, uniform language throughout the land. By 1640 (the printing press had been introduced in England by William Caxton in 1476), over 20,000 books and pamphlets written in English had been printed. Other factors contributing to the diminution of regional dialects were the spread of popular education, the rising literacy of the population, and the development of rapid means of communication and transportation.

Language Standards And The Academies

Although all of these elements have contributed to modern English, there are still three broad types of English. They are the spoken standard, which is the language heard in the conversation of educated people; the written standard, the language of prose and poetry found in books; and the vulgar or illiterate slang of those who are ignorant or indifferent to the ideals of correctness by which the educated are governed. The interesting thing about these types of English is that none of them is wrong. The spread of English to North America and Australia has affected standard English. Even the spoken standard, or as it is sometimes called, the received standard, is something that varies in different parts of the English-speaking world.

Unlike French or Italian, the English language is anarchic in the sense that there has never existed one central authority to determine the standard language. In France in 1647, the grammarian, Vaugelas, had defined good usage as the speech habits of the sounder members of the King's court, as well as conformity to the practice in writing of the sounder contemporary authors. In 1635, Cardinal Richelieu had authorized the formation of the Academie Francaise, composed of writers, bookish nobles, magistrates, and amateur men of letters. Its principal function was to give exact rules to the language. The Academie became the Supreme Court of the French language, and set itself the task of preparing a dictionary. Work began on the dictionary in 1639, but it was not published until 1694. In Italy, the Academy della Crusca was founded even earlier, in 1582. Its purpose, too, was to purify the Italian language. In 1612, it published a dictionary,

Vocabolario Degli Academici Della Crusca, which became the standard of the Italian language.

The earliest calls for a language academy in England were voiced during the last half of the 16th Century. A proposal was made in 1660, for an academy “to purifie our Native Language from Barbarism,” and in 1664, the Royal Society voted that there should be a committee for improving the English language. John Dryden, the famous English poet, was a member. Though nothing came of the committee meetings, by the end of the century another notable writer, Daniel Defoe, was agitating for an academy for England. In his 1697, *Essay Upon Projects*, he concluded that it should be “as criminal to coin words as money.” A decade later, Jonathan Swift published *A Proposal For Correcting, Improving, and Ascertaining the English Tongue*, because he saw “no absolute necessity why any language should be perpetually changing.” Though not proposing a formal academy, Swift suggested that his Majesty appoint a society to govern the language, but no such institution was established.

By the mid-1700s, various writers in England such as Alexander Pope, William Washburton, and Samuel Johnson were thinking about the compilation of a new English dictionary based upon the usage of recognized authorities. Pope drew up a list of writers whose works he thought should be examined, and somehow this list fell into the hands of Samuel Johnson. This was the impetus for Johnson’s famous dictionary which was published in 1755. In the preface to his *Dictionary*, Johnson noted his objections to Dryden’s and Swift’s idea for an English academy to “fix” the language:

[foreign] academies have been instituted, to guard the avenues of their languages, to restrain fugitives, and repulse intruders; but their vigilance and activity have hitherto been vain; sounds are too volatile and subtle for legal restraints; to enchain syllables, and to lash the wind, are equally the undertakings of pride, unwilling to measure its desires by strength. ...If an academy should be established...which I, who can never wish to see dependance multiplied, hope the spirit of English liberty will hinder or destroy [it].

English Can Take Care of Itself

In 1761, Joseph Priestley echoed Johnson’s negative view by inserting the following passage in his *Grammar*:

As to a public Academy, invested with authority to ascertain the use of words, which is a project that some persons

are very sanguine in their expectations from, I think it is not only unsuitable to the genius of a free nation, but in itself ill calculated to reform and fix a language. We need make no doubt but that the best forms of speech will, in time, establish themselves by their own superior excellence: and, in all controversies, it is better to wait the decisions of time, which are slow and sure, than to take those of synods, which are often hasty and injudicious.

In effect, Priestley and others were recognizing that good usage does not depend on the force of law and language academies, but rather must be based on rational principles and rules, which are generally known and accepted. The so-called laws of language are simply brief, summary statements of accepted usage. Since no one has been appointed to be the supreme arbiter of the English language, standard English must rest upon the sanction of custom and good sense. As the English language has evolved, there is no absolute standard of rightness. Each speaker or writer recognizes that usage is his or her own affair, with due regard to the usage of other good writers and speakers. The duty of determination falls upon each of us, just as it does in every other affair of life. As Ayn Rand once said: "Who is the final authority in ethics?...Who 'decided' what is the right way to make an automobile...? Any man who cares to acquire the appropriate knowledge and to judge, at and for his own risk and sake."

As Bloomfield and Newmark, in their book, *A Linguistic Introduction to the History of English* (1967), have put it, the linguistic authoritarian laments the corruption of English and tends to disapprove of any changes except perhaps for words labeling new inventions. On the opposing hand, the linguistic libertarian "feels that English can take care of itself, as it did for hundreds of years before people in the seventeenth century began to worry about the state of English." English-speaking people have always struggled with spelling and grammatical rules, but it was not until the 1600s that anyone recognized the importance of setting down "rules" for good usage. Rules for the use of shall/will, should/would were said to have been laid out by the 17th Century grammarian, John Wallis; that about the meaning of a double negative by John Lowth in 1762. In 1765, William Ward, in his *Grammar of the English Language*, drew up the forerunners of the rules which are found in modern grammar books.

A major force behind a standardized grammar and spelling in England were the commercial printers and publishers. It was they who led the way to orthographic regularity in the 17th and 18th Centuries. Formal spelling "reform," however, did not really get underway until the 19th Century. The development of several forms of shorthand, the interest of both English and

American Philological Societies in the 1880s, and the formation of the American Spelling Reform Association in 1876, all contributed to a concern for a more consistent and simplified spelling. In 1906, Andrew Carnegie funded a quarter of a million dollars to the Simplified Spelling Board. The main purpose of most of these movements was to eliminate some of the most obvious anomalies in the traditional system. Generally speaking, though they all relied on voluntary means, and neither the English nor the American public was ever persuaded of the value of their suggestions.

The Dictionary

One consequence of the absence of any central authority to set up and enforce spelling or grammatical standards in the language, is that English writers and speakers give their dictionaries and grammar books an aura of authority and a degree of respect unknown or rare among people using other languages. The dictionary and the traditional prescriptive grammar have been made the final arbiter of correctness in English, and although they have represented quite a unifying force, there are often numerous differences between authoritative and reputable dictionaries. The controversy surrounding the appearance of *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*, in the early 1960s, is some indication that not all dictionaries are considered equal. Many commentators thought that the compilers' permissive attitude represented an abdication of their responsibility to judge good English usage.

English lexicographers, until the mid-19th Century, considered it to be their role to register words only deemed "good" for literary usage. The first effective protest in England against the supremacy of this literary view of dictionary-making was made in 1857 by Dean Trench, in a paper he read before the English Philological Society. His point was that the dictionary maker should be a historian and not a critic of good language usage. The philologist's view is that the dictionary should be a record of all the words – current and obsolete – of that language, with all their meanings and uses. This view emphasizes the fact that languages continually grow and progress.

The first work to carry the title of *The English Dictionary* was produced in 1623 by Henry Cockeram. Up until then the chief motive behind dictionary-making in England was to assist the students of foreign languages. For the next century, English lexicography concentrated on dictionaries of hard or difficult words. The first attempt to list all the words in the language was made by Nathaniel Bailey, when he published his *Universal Etymological Dictionary* in 1721. This was followed by Samuel

Johnson's dictionary in 1755. Although marred by errors, Johnson cataloged the English vocabulary much more fully than had ever been done before, and supplied thousands of quotations illustrating the use of words.

The Oxford English Dictionary

The next major advance in dictionary-making did not come about until the late 19th Century. In 1888, the first volume of the monumental *Oxford New English Dictionary, On Historical Principles* appeared, under the editorship of James Murray. Murray himself was an extraordinary dictionary-maker, but his compilation (not to be completed until after he died, and made with the help of other editors and hundreds of other helpers) has yet to be outdone. Murray's task was to trace the life history of every English word in use or known to have been used since 1150 A.D. By the time the project was completed in 1928, the dictionary contained 15,488 pages covering more than 400,000 words and phrases (by comparison, the recently published second edition contains 21,728 pages and defines more than half a million words).

One of the main differences between Murray's dictionary (referred to hereafter as the *O.E.D.*) and others is that in all modern dictionaries, except the *O.E.D.*, the quotations are used to help make the definitions clearer or to provide information about the entry under which it appears. In the *O.E.D.*, quotations are used to show the historical development of the different significations of the word under which they are given. Other special features of the *O.E.D.* are the completeness with which variations in orthography are given, the full and scientific etymologies, the phonetic precision with which British pronunciation is given, and the elaborate subdivisions of meaning.

The original idea for the *O.E.D.* came from the English Philological Society, which was founded in 1842. The object of this organization was to investigate the structure, affinities, and history of language. In 1857, the Society began collecting words which had not been included in Johnson's work of 1755, or a more recent work by Dr. Charles Richardson, whose *New Dictionary of the English Language* appeared in 1837. The Society invited the public to help in assembling these new words, and the project was so successful that some members thought it would be wise to compile a new dictionary altogether. In early 1858, the Society adopted this idea, and for the next twenty years, volunteer editors and researchers worked on the project. Although headway was made in collecting materials, it was not until the University of Oxford's Clarendon Press agreed to pay an editor,

James Murray, who began working full-time on the dictionary in 1879, that real progress began.

From a voluntaryist viewpoint, the most interesting aspect of the work on the *O.E.D.* was that although the work was of national, and even international importance, it was basically a private undertaking, spurred by the hope of commercial profit. James Murray had no formal university training or degree, but did have a formidable knowledge of world-wide languages. One of his biographers referred to him as the “most learned bank clerk in England.” Brought up on the English-Scottish border, Murray was struck from childhood with the failure of political boundaries to coincide with the natural frontiers or boundaries between languages (what linguists refer to as an isogloss). By the time he took over the reins of the dictionary project, he had worked in the international department of a British bank, and then taught in a private school for a number of years. He had also been an active participant, writer, and researcher for the Philological Society.

Rather than dissipate his energies on a number of smaller projects, he decided to devote all of his time to the dictionary, in an effort to do one big thing well. The dictionary became his life’s work, and was not only a labor of love, but one of near-martyrdom, due to the strenuous efforts he put forth on its behalf. Murray’s only involvement with the English government was his being awarded a Civil List Pension of 250 pounds a year, beginning in 1884. Although Murray had help from nearly 1000 voluntary helpers, and eventually from a number of assistant editors, nearly half of the work on the *O.E.D.* was done by him before his death in 1915. It was his obstinate resistance to all the pressures upon him to stop short of excellence which insured the lasting quality of the *O.E.D.* His efforts surely proved that what is worth doing, is worth doing well, and that good work, once in print, becomes an eternal inheritance which remains of value for generations to come.

Language and Political Control

It is fortunate for English-speaking peoples the world over that Murray and others devoted their lives to the publication of the *O.E.D.* No matter what changes the English language undergoes in the future, the *O.E.D.* will remain a monument to its inherently voluntaryist history. One of the most likely shifts is an increasing tendency away from unrestricted evolution toward increasing political control over it wherever it is spoken. Indeed, both linguists and political thinkers have recognized the important relationship between language and political control. Noam Chomsky has

noted that, “in a State such as the United States, where the government can’t control the people by force, it had better control what they think.” Indeed, one of the ways to control what people think is to control the language and concepts they use to express political ideas. The purpose of Newspeak in George Orwell’s novel, *1984*, was to not only set up a means of communication, but to act as a subtle, yet effective, means of oppression. Newspeak eliminated “undesirable” words, and by diminishing the breadth of the vocabulary, diminished the range of thought. All this was done to make “all heretical, unorthodox thinking literally unthinkable, at least so far as thought is dependent on words.” Orwell realized that “freedom cannot endure without a highly developed language” to express a broad range of ideas.

Language is one of the most important and the most powerful weapons in the hands of a State that is dedicated to controlling and transforming human beings into slavery. As Orwell put it, the purpose of language and thought control is as “an instrument with which to express the philosophies and thoughts that are permitted,” and to make “all other sorts of thinking impossible.” In a recent book, *Cogs in the Wheel* (1988), about “The Formation of Soviet Man,” Mikhail Heller has observed that Soviet language is being “used to destroy the capacity for logical thought and to shut people’s eyes to the true nature of things.” As Orwell predicted, (the Soviet) language is one of the most important means of preventing people from acquiring more knowledge than the State wishes. The Soviet State does this by deciding what a word means and the circumstances in which it can be used. This is accomplished by possessing absolute power over the word and the means of transmitting it. This is why censorship was introduced in the Soviet Union ten days after the beginning of the October Revolution in 1917. Within the space of a year, all non-Communist periodicals and newspapers were shut down, and total control over the printing press was established. As Lenin asked in 1920, since “ideas are much more fatal things than guns, why should a man be allowed to buy a printing press and disseminate pernicious opinions calculated to embarrass the government?”

Soviet censors regard the world as a semantic system in which the information that is let through is the only reality. Instead of expanding vocabulary and accuracy of thought, emphasis is put on reducing independent thinking. In terms of truth or falsehood, the objective sense of the world no longer exists. Instead of dealing with real things, the censor hopes that his world view will be accepted. Only what the censor approves is said to exist; what he disapproves has no independent existence. To

illustrate the effects of language control in the Soviet Union, Heller relates a story by a Soviet author who writes about a leader who possesses magical powers. The politician declares a river's water to be vodka. "But the people who drink the water complain that though it tastes like vodka, it doesn't make them drunk." Language control in the Soviet Union is designed to make people accept anything the authorities want them to believe.

Liberty, the Mother, not the Daughter of Order

Fortunately for the human race, there always seem to remain some hardheaded realists that insist on maintaining contact with reality and thinking for themselves. At least these people, however few they might be, realize that appearances are not always what they seem to be. It is these people who appreciate the fact that though diversity appears to spawn chaos, it is usually out of the voluntaryist vortex of great diversity that true order springs.

The absence of compulsory standards has not hindered the development of English. As this overview of its history demonstrates, this is why English is such a rich, vibrant, "crazy" language. Just as "Liberty is the mother of order, not the daughter of order," so voluntaryism has been the mother of our English tongue. Lacking any official or centralized standards, English has evolved to become one of the world's most widely used languages. A clear parallel exists between English and other categories of the spontaneous order. The lack of a centralized, monopolistic justice system (police, courts, and law) would not impede the development of "common law" and "order" in a voluntaryist society. Just as dictionary-makers compete in the free market today, justice agencies would compete to provide their customers with the best possible rules and service at the lowest possible price.

Among many of the important institutions comprising the spontaneous order, one of them has remained largely unsullied by statist intervention. Voluntaryism has dominated the English language for most of its history (fortunately the teaching of language by the public schools only began two or three centuries ago). Money, another major institution of the spontaneous order, has been under the thumb of statist control almost since its very inception. If the history and present status of these two institutions is compared, is there any doubt about which institution works more smoothly, and whether voluntaryism or statism is a better method on which to base our social life?

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(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 45, pp. 1, 4-7, August 1990)

Initiation Of Force

By Harry Hoiles

The *initiation* of force against peaceful people is *always* wrong. Yet most citizens of our country support this *initiation* of force when it is used to collect taxes.

Why do they do so?

Is it because they can't visualize a government which is voluntarily supported?

Aren't there thousands of voluntarily-supported police forces (private night-watchmen, security guards, detective and investigative agencies) in these United States?

Aren't there thousands of voluntarily-supported firemen (hundreds of communities have volunteer fire companies) in these United States?

Aren't there thousands of voluntarily-supported judges (private arbitrators, dispute resolution counselors) in these United States?

Aren't there thousands of voluntarily-supported schools (private, church, etc.) in these United States?

Aren't there thousands of voluntarily-supported package delivery companies (United Parcel Service, Federal Express, etc.) in these United States?

Doesn't the free market supply all these in addition to those provided by our involuntarily-supported government?

Why don't we rely on the free market to supply all these services instead of coercively collecting taxes from some and forcefully preventing others from effectively competing for customer patronage?

(*The Voluntarist*, No. 58, p. 6, October 1992)

On Moving the World

By Douglas Mataconis

Every so often, an event occurs that stands as a monument to the continuing struggle for human freedom and serves as a reminder to all who work for liberty that even when success seems farthest from reach, they can make a difference. Whether it is the Boston Tea Party, the storming of the Bastille, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or the assault on the Berlin Wall, such events are a vivid reminder that man has an undying desire to be free.

Of all these, however, there is one event that will stand alone as the simplest and yet most profound reminder not only of the universal desire for liberty but also of the power of a single individual. This event occurred on June 5, 1989, one day after the Chinese government massacred thousands of its own citizens in Tiananmen Square. As a column of tanks rolled down the ironically named Boulevard of Heavenly Peace, a lone man ran into the middle of the street and stood in front of the lead tank, preventing the entire column from moving. For one brief moment, the age-old historical struggle between the individual and the state was crystallized into the image of this one man standing perfectly erect, staring straight ahead, with the gun turret of a tank pointed at him. It is said that the quest for freedom is the struggle between the armed state with its ultimate resort to the power of a gun and the individual with often nothing more than his principles to defend him. Never before has one event so perfectly represented this struggle before the world, and never before has the power of principle and the impotence of force been more perfectly communicated.

To those who fight the daily battle for liberty on even the smallest, most inconspicuous, and sometimes apparently the most meaningless level, the actions of this man in Beijing should serve as an inspiration and a reminder that, though a single individual may seem powerless to change anything, the greatest success must always begin with some one who is willing to stand up and fight for what he believes. Where, after all, would the world be today were it not for the first American patriot who resisted British rule, the first Frenchman who stood up against the *ancien regime*, the first person who refused to comply with the Nazis' plan to murder every Jew in Europe, or the first East European who demanded his freedom in the worst days of Communist tyranny?

At the time, it may have seemed to all of these people that they were

On Moving the World

engaged in a hopeless exercise, that the resistance of one man is nothing compared with the military and political power of a state. They acted not because they knew that they would win, for victory was far from certain, and not as part of a mass struggle against tyranny, for they were, at least initially, quite alone. They acted because they knew they were right, because they wanted to be free, and because they hoped that by taking a stand they would inspire others to do the same. History, of course, proved them correct in the long run – acting alone they not only inspired others but eventually proved victorious. The undeniable lesson of history is this: One person, backed only by the strength of his convictions, can make a difference; one man can change the world.

—Douglas Mataconis

George Mason University School of Law (Reprinted from *The Freeman*, September 1991).

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 58, p. 6, October 1992)

Change When It Comes

By Michael Medved

“[C]hange, when it comes, will amount to nothing less than a grassroots revolution. It won’t flow from the top down, but from the bottom up. ... What matters ultimately in the culture wars, is what we do in our daily lives – not the big statements that we broadcast to the world at large, but the small messages we send through our families and our neighbors and our communities. And those small messages, reinforcing each other from every direction, can become a powerful enough force to change the world. The future of America will depend on not so much the movers and the shakers in the centers of power, but on the hopes that we generate in our own communities, our schools, our churches, synagogues, and families. What we do there will count for even more, in the long run, than what they will do in Washington.”

—Michael Medved, PBS Film Critic in *Imprimis*, February 1991.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 59, p. 7, December 1992)

Freedom – a Way, Not a Goal

By Robert LeFevre

Here at the *Gazette Telegraph* we endeavor to offer as complete an understanding of the philosophy of liberty and individualism as our capacities permit. We do so in the face of a world which is not friendly to this philosophy and which opposes it in many ways and at many points.

One reason for this opposition may relate to the fact that existing realities are far removed from freedom in an absolute sense. Thus, the person seeking to understand the philosophy confronts the dichotomy of reality on the one hand, and freedom on the other hand as a presumed goal to be reached. We are endeavoring here to show that freedom is a way of living and not a goal to be attained.

We cannot make the world free. It has never been free. It is certainly doubtful if in our life time the world will accept freedom as a general condition. This is one of the grave errors contained in attempting to vote freedom into power. It is in essence, an attempt to carry out the absurdity of Rousseau, who opined that freedom was so important for everyone that he would “force them to be free.”

Freedom has never been provided a people by its government. The government cannot make men free and neither can we. From the beginning of man’s sojourn on this planet we have seen some men, bigger or less moral than others, employ force to compel others to their way. To offset this, other men, taking freedom as their banner, have proclaimed that if we followed them, they would “make” everyone free. But freedom, in this respect, is a delicate growth and it cannot be “made” for anyone.

But you can be free. Your freedom depends on you and not on society. And you begin to sense this when you strongly resolve, within yourself, to do nothing at all that will interfere with the freedom of others. Other men may practice non-freedom. But you do not have to. Other men also rob banks and wage wars, and commit acts of violence upon their neighbors. You cannot prevent them from doing this. But you can increase the total area of freedom when you highly resolve not to conduct your life in any such manner.

Some will say that this cannot be done unless all men join together in a universal wish to be free. But, if this is the protest, we will contend that it was in error. On this planet today there are men still living in a state of savagery, comparable in all respects to that of neolithic peoples. And on

this same planet we have other men who have learned to put aside savage ways, who live like civilized men.

If civilization were dependent upon a universal view, then we would have to contend that the 20th century is a snare and an illusion. But it is not. It is here and it is real.

Granted, we do not know many men who are fully civilized. But we do know some. These are men who refuse utterly to have a part in wrong doing. This does not mean that by their abstinence they are preventing others from doing wrong. They know they cannot do this. But they can prevent themselves from doing wrong. The only energy they control is their own.

There is no panacea if your goal is freedom. Nor will you find another nation more susceptible to freedom than is our own. Some we have known have grown weary of the constant frustration they experience here and flee to other places. But they do not find freedom by so doing. The problems they confront in their new abode are the same as the problems they left behind.

The world is not of our making. The only way we could fully escape the problems of this world is to leave it by dying. We do not propose to do this. But we do propose to make of our community, our city, our state and our nation, as much a haven of freedom and of the free as we know how. The very existence of a Freedom Newspaper and the exploration in a philosophy of freedom proves that it can be done to some extent in the world in which we live.

We have sworn unending support of the freedom concept and unending effort to rid the world of ignorance concerning freedom. Do we wish or expect to see the world remade in our image? Heaven forbid. Do we expect to see freedom become the going philosophy in our life times? No, we do not.

But if we may borrow a note from the Christophers, let us suggest that it is better to light one candle than to curse the darkness. It is better to control one's self than to rail at others because they do not control themselves.

The true significance of individualism is never found in concerted action. It is found in individual action and self-control. It is not a goal that can be reached by others through your efforts or our efforts. It is a way of life you can select for yourself, if you will.

From the Colorado Springs *Gazette-Telegraph*, Nov. 22, 1964.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 65, pp. 1-2, December 1993)

Freedom Is a Two-edged Sword

By Arthur Gordon

Last summer on the Fourth of July I found myself in a group listening to a short patriotic address. The speaker talked about the meaning of Independence Day. He spoke of the men who signed the Declaration, their courage, their dedication. He reminded us of our heritage of freedom, how precious it is, and how jealously we should guard it.

We applauded when he was through. But suddenly, as the applause died away, a voice spoke from the crowd: "Why don't you tell them the whole truth?"

Startled, we all looked around. The words had come from a young man in a tweed jacket with untidy hair and intense, angry eyes. He might have been a college student, a poet, a Peace Corps worker, almost anything.

"Why don't you tell them that freedom is the most dangerous gift anyone can receive?" he said. "Why don't you tell them that it's a two-edged sword that will destroy us unless we learn how to use it, and soon? Why don't you make them see that we face a greater challenge than our ancestors ever did? They only had to fight for freedom. We have to live with it!" He stared for a moment at our blank, uncomprehending faces. Then he shrugged his way through the crowd and was gone.

Now, almost a year later, I find myself still thinking about that young man. I think he was a person seized by a swift and stunning insight, and he had the courage to shout it out. He was right: Freedom is dangerous; it can be a two-edged blade. Look at this country today. All around us there seems to be a drastic decline in morals: cheating where once there was honesty, promiscuity where once there was decency, crime where once there was respect for law. Everywhere there seems to be a growing laxness, an indifference, a softness that terrifies people who think about it.

And what lies behind all this? Perhaps the angry young man was trying to tell us the truth. Perhaps we do have a blind and misguided concept of liberty. Perhaps we are using the freedom of choice gained for us by our forefathers to choose the wrong things.

Ever since our country won its independence, something in us has been deeply suspicious of authority. "Give us more freedom!" has been our constant cry. This was valid when it was directed against tyranny or oppression or exploitation, but we have pushed the concept far beyond

that. The freedom we now claim has come to mean freedom from all unpleasantness: from hardship, from discipline, from the stern voice of duty, from the pain of self-sacrifice.

“Give us fewer rules, or more elastic ones!” This demand has weakened our courts of justice and shaken the foundations of the church.

“Give us more leisure and less work!” This one sounds enlightened and alluring, but at the end of the road lie sterility and boredom.

“Give us the freedom to decide moral questions for ourselves!” This one ignores the fact that once morals become relative it is hard to justify any morality at all.

As a nation, in short, we have clamored for total freedom. Now we have just about got it, and we are facing a bleak and chilling truth: We have flung off one external restraint after another, but in the process we have not learned how to restrain ourselves.

It is this truth that causes, deep in our souls, the uneasiness we feel despite all our prosperity and power. It is the knowledge that we have abandoned our ancient certainties but have so far found nothing to replace them. It is the premonition that unless we learn to control ourselves this climate of ultra freedom may be replaced by a climate of repression. It is the fear that if we do not learn to guard and preserve our own best values, some form of tyranny will surely attempt to take them from us. This is no idle fear. It took Babylon 1000 years, and Rome 500, to decline and fall, but we have no such comfortable margin. Time and distance have diminished; the clock of history ticks faster.

So maybe on this Independence Day we should be thinking not so much about the freedom from tyranny that our ancestors won, as about the chaos that freedom can bring to those who do not use it wisely. We should ponder the truth of the old saying, “A man’s worst difficulties begin when he is able to do what he likes.” We should face up to the fact that, in the proportion to which we dismiss our external restraints, each of us has a solemn moral obligation to restrain himself.

This can never be easy. But the time has come in our national life when we need to look straight at some of the ugly areas in our society – the divorce statistics, the crime statistics, the weakening of family ties, the swirling clouds of racial hatred, the sex explosion on our campuses, the grim persistence of alcoholism, the death toll on our highways – and ask ourselves to what extent these things stem from a distorted concept of freedom which leaves men free to be selfish, free to be lazy, free to be ignoble, free to be weak.

If personal freedom of choice is our goal and our ideal as a nation,

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then our first fundamental choice must be not to abuse that freedom. This is what independence really means: self discipline. And this we would do well to remember when we see the flag we love blazing against the sky on Independence Day.

From *A Touch of Wonder* (New York: Jove Books, 1978, first published 1974, pp. 166-168.)

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 65, pp. 1-2, December 1993)

No Guarantees: Freedom Depends On You!

By Carl Watner

The previous two articles have as their main theme the fact that no person or group of people, gathered together as an institution or organization, can guarantee your liberty or freedom. Your freedom depends on you, since freedom is self-control. A free person doesn't ask for freedom or exhibit what I call the "give me" syndrome ("Give me disaster relief" or "Give me a government subsidy" or "Give me unemployment benefits.") Nor do self-governing individuals need or want other people to give them coercive orders.

The flip-side of being free is being responsible. Ultimately, no one can be responsible for another, any more than he can control that other. All control comes from inside the head, that is, from the ideas that each person accepts about how he may be controlled. Voluntarists understand that no one can make you do a thing against your will. As I have often said, you may be killed for your refusal to obey; but outsiders or so-called authorities cannot make you obey. Only you can make you obey.

Being free provides opportunities: to excel as well as to fail; to earn a profit or incur a loss; to act morally or immorally. As I wrote in "The Fundamentals of Voluntarism," "the voluntary principle assures us that while we may have the possibility of choosing the worst, we also have the possibility of choosing the best. It provides us with the opportunity to make things better, though it doesn't guarantee results. Wherever there is a chance for the good life, the risk of a bad one must be accepted." Freedom to choose means discerning right from wrong, and then being able to act on that determination.

As Bob LeFevre explained in his editorial, "Freedom – a Way, Not a Goal," only you can light your own candle. Not lighting your candle because others do not light theirs is illogical behavior. There is no excuse for railing at others if they do not light their candles. Worry about your own light. As Zeno the Stoic pointed out, if you stoop to throw mud at the mud-throwers, no one can tell you apart.

If you believe in freedom and right living, then live as free and right as you can. Not only will your actions serve as an example and inspiration to others, but it will prove that you are self-disciplined and responsible. You have to keep your eye on the ball, and it has to be your eye and your ball.

No Guarantees: Freedom Depends On You!

There are no guarantees, but if each of us takes care of the means – the end will take care of itself.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 65, p. 8, December 1993)

Make One Small Change In Your Life

There once was a woman who was not a tidy housekeeper; one day an acquaintance gave her a beautiful rose which she brought home and placed in a vase in her living room.

The perfect rose only made the vase look tarnished and dusty, so the woman painstakingly polished the vase, and then set the rose on the table.

But now something looked wrong with the table, so she cleaned it as well.

At last the woman stood back and admired the sparkling table and the polished vase and the beautiful rose – only to realize, much to her dismay, the rest of the room now appeared dark and dull.

Before long, she was scrubbing the walls, washing the curtains, opening the windows, and letting light and air into every dark corner.

The moral of the story: Make one small positive change in your life, light up one small corner, and in no time your whole life can take on a different look.

Reprinted from *ABA Business Briefs*, Summer 1993.

(*The Voluntaryist*, No. 65, p. 8, December 1993)

On States of Mind

By David McKells

[Editor's Note: The following article first appeared in the Spring 1991 issue of *Small Farmer's Journal* (Box 1627, Sisters, OR 97759), a publication which advocates horse-powered, family farming. Although the topics of voluntaryism and the survival of small farming may seem miles apart, in fact, there is a close parallel which is brought out in this article. Freedom can only grow and thrive if we practice it ourselves and pass its spirit along to our children and close friends, just as small farming can survive only, as the author of this piece concludes, if they "work, practically, gracefully, and with dignity."

His most important point, however, is that the Hopi Indians understood that the enemy "is a state of mind." Stockpiling guns to defend ourselves against the State or trying to get elected to some office may seem like powerful strategies, but, in fact, they are not. Both mimic the enemy, by attempting to fight the State on its own ground. Such strategies are a failure, from the voluntaryist point of view, because they only reinforce the attitudes that make it possible for the State to exist in the first place. If we want to deal voluntarily with other people, and have them deal with us likewise, then we need to practice freedom and liberty in our own lives. It may seem difficult to "resist not evil," but there are powerful reasons, both moral and utilitarian, for heeding that advice. "Those who fight evil necessarily take on the characteristics of the enemy and become evil themselves."

Bob LeFevre used to draw a large "T" chart on the blackboard. One side he would describe as the State and City Hall. The other side of the "T" he would label "Freedom and Liberty." To which side of the "T" do you want to devote your life's energies - fighting City Hall or becoming a better person, raising a family and operating a profitable, honest business? Portrayed graphically in this manner, the question leaves little room for hesitation. The voluntaryist will never hesitate to opt for "Freedom and Liberty," knowing that "if you take care of the means, the end will take care of itself." Or as the Hopi elder put it, "strong and deliberate persistence in one's own way and prayer (are always) the best weapons."]

I read the 'editorial debate' in the Winter '91 issue with great interest. It was especially meaningful to me that Arthur and Zelka should cite the federal government's attempt to relocate the Navajo and Hopi from Big

Mountain, Arizona, so that Peabody Coal can strip-mine coal to ship to Japan. They cite this issue as compelling them to turn their interest towards activism.

It was exactly this issue that compelled me to move from activism (no matter how good that “steadfast self-martyring gaze” felt) to the much more focused task of trying to run the family farm.

I was in graduate school at the University of Colorado when I first heard of the ongoing tragedy of Big Mountain. I was deeply touched, for I had been the sixth generation on a farm located between the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers in western Kentucky. My family settled there in the 1780s. The federal government ran us off our land in the 1960s when Kentucky and Berkeley Dams were built so that “Land Between the Lakes” recreation area could be formed. Many tried to resist with lawyers and sometimes more desperate means.

The image of an old, one-legged woman holding off the government men with a double-barreled shotgun is permanently etched into my mind. Those who tried to hold out, including the old woman, had their houses bulldozed and burned with all their belongings still inside.

I had always tried to tell myself that this sort of thing could not happen anymore, but here were Indians trying to hold off the same treatment from the same government. I joined a group working on this issue and spent time at Big Mountain talking with these people. It was during this time that things started to click. They had been on their land a long time. The Hopi have been farming on the same ground for 10 to 15 thousand years. Many of them had never bothered to learn English. All they knew was their way. And it was enough. They knew that their lives were a direct expression of that piece of land. And they understood that their farming practices and religious attitude (the two are not separate) tied them to their land through each complex interaction. Too many people think being moved to “better” real estate would be a great deal. But this is because they are native to no place. Home is a place to commute from.

A Hopi Elder told me that the bulldozers and federal marshals supporting Peabody Coal were not the enemy. The enemy, he said, is a state of mind. It’s a state of mind that has been carrying out a conquest of this continent ever since it hit the East Coast. The conquest was not about guns vs. arrows. That was a symptom of the disease. The disease was a clash between states of mind. If you fight a state of mind with confrontation, he told me, you strengthen that state of mind. (Resist not evil.) Our enemy, he said, is on a different plane from the bulldozers. He thought strong and deliberate persistence in one’s own way and prayer were the best weapons.

I understand the predicament these people are in. I had been there as a kid. Then an interesting sequence of events occurred. I found myself in a university working with lawyers and professional activists. I was trying to help the “native” cause from the position of a conquistador. I felt like the people Wendell Berry speaks of who oppose power plants from their air-conditioned homes. Then I got word that an offer had been made on my maternal grandparents’ farm. This hundred-acre farm, about twenty miles from the paternal family farm now covered with Winnebagos, was going to be subdivided unless somebody in the family wanted it. And no one else did.

Something snapped. Had we not been native to these farms? Was not the subdividing of that farm more of the conquest I was wanting to help stop? That state of mind which holds no place in reverence, which turns husbandry into agribusiness, and would willingly strip-mine farm for money, was about to consume my family farm for the second time. The notion of “home” in its full sense became very real.

Now my only connection with a university is when I get a soil test. I mend fences my grandfather built. I cut hay he sowed in fields he cleared. I water my horses in creeks I played in as a child. I have repaired the barn my father and both grandfathers built together. And I build fences and outbuildings my kids may someday repair. But perhaps most of all, I cultivate an intimate knowledge, love, and reverence for this place in all its intricate complexity. Does this help the Hopi and Navajo who are at this moment trying to patiently outlast Peabody Coal and the federal bureaucracy? Not on the plane where bulldozers exist.

But the conquest is very quietly going on all around us. Speaking out, passing petitions, etc., all need to be done. But I believe the strongest blow I can make against that state of mind - the one trying to gobble up the last remnants of traditional Indians as well as the last remnants of the family farms - is to be truly at home in my place. To raise a family here and pray the kids will understand. To nurture a native, respectful state of mind.

Perhaps the strongest, most direct weapon we have is to make our farms work, practically, gracefully and with dignity. And do it out front and in the open for everyone to see.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 71, pp. 7-8, December 1994)

Attitude

By Charles Swindoll

The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude ... is more important than the past, than education, than money, than circumstances, than failures, than successes, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness or skill. It will make or break a company...a church...a home. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding, the attitude we will embrace... . The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you; ... we are in charge of our Attitudes.

(The Voluntaryist, No. 71, p. 7, December 1994)

Section VI

Aphorisms

(*The Voluntaryist* issue and page number are included in brackets after each aphorism.)

In a State in which the government cannot control the people by force, it better control what they think. – Noam Chomsky
[No. 37, p. 7]

The public school is our actual U. S. state religion. [Public] libraries are the religion's auxiliary. – J. C. Davis
[No. 38, p. 7]

If the individual is led to believe he is not totally responsible for his actions, his actions will become largely irresponsible.
[No. 42, p. 5]

A Scottish blessing
If there is righteousness in the heart there will be beauty in the character.
If there is beauty in the character there will be harmony in the home.
If there is harmony in the home, there will be order in the nation.
If there is order in the nation there will be peace in the world
[No. 43, p. 2]

“Where It All Begins”
Perhaps we might profit from a study of the *family* as the basic wellspring of anarchist *tendencies*, instead of considering it as the font of the inculcation of reverence for God and Country, exclusively. For surely this is the place where we all start, and where fundamental ideas relating to self and to mutual aid are first engendered, the incubation place where dedication to one's welfare and to that of one's closest associates is first emphasized, and neglect or deliberate flouting of the demands of State abstractions and impersonal institutionalized power is first seen, felt, and emulated. – James J. Martin
[No. 45, p. 2]

No man is physically enslaved until he is first mentally enslaved.
[No. 45, p. 7]

A Story About Drugs Carries A Potent Warning About The State.

Many years ago, Indian youths would go away in solitude to prepare for manhood. One such youth hiked into a beautiful valley, green with trees, bright with flowers. There he fasted. But upon the third day, as he looked up at the surrounding mountains, he noticed one tall rugged peak, capped with dazzling snow.

I will test myself against that mountain, he thought. He put on his buffalo-hide shirt, threw his blanket over his shoulders and set off to climb the peak.

When he reached the top he stood on the rim of the world. He could see forever, and his heart swelled with pride. Then he heard a rustle at his feet, and looking down, saw a snake. Before he could move the snake spoke.

"I am about to die," said the snake. "It is too cold for me up here and I am freezing. There is no food and I am starving. Put me under your shirt and take me down into the valley."

"No," said the youth. "I am forewarned. I know your kind. You are a rattlesnake. If I pick you up, you will bite, and your bite will kill me."

"Not so," said the snake. "I will treat you differently. If you do this for me, you will be special. I will not harm you."

The youth rested for a while, but this was a very persuasive snake with beautiful markings. At last the youth tucked it under his shirt and carried it down to the valley. There he laid it gently on the grass, when suddenly the snake coiled, rattled, and leapt, biting him on the leg.

"But you promised," cried the youth.

"You knew when you picked me up," said the snake as he slithered away.

And now, wherever you go, tell that story. I tell it especially to the young people of this nation who might be tempted by drugs. I want them to remember the words of the snake: **"You knew what I was when you picked me up."**

– Native American Indian Iron Eyes Cody, in *Guideposts*, July 1988 and November 1989

[No. 45, p. 2-6]

One good mother is worth a hundred school teachers because her manner, customs, and language are carried through life. – Attributed to Herbert Spencer

[No. 48, p. 6]

A child only educated at school is an uneducated child. – George Santayana

[No. 48, p. 4]

If you want your children to keep their feet on the ground, put some responsibility on their shoulders.

[No. 53, p. 3]

The Power of One

Your task -

To build a better world, said God.

I answered, "How?

The world is such a large, vast place,

So complicated now.

And I so small and useless am.

There's nothing I can do."

But God

In his great wisdom said,

"Just build a better you."

– Dorothy James

[No. 54, p. 2]

The only real revolution is in the enlightenment of the mind and the improvement of character, the only real emancipation is individual, and the only real revolutionists are philosophers and saints. - Will and Ariel Durant

[No. 60, p. 4]

The Bridge Builder

An old man, going a lone highway,

Came at the evening, cold and gray

To a chasm, vast, and deep, and wide

Through which was flowing a sullen tide.

The old man crossed in the twilight dim -

That sullen stream had no fears for him.

But he turned when he reached the other side.

And built a bridge to span the tide.

"Old man," said a fellow pilgrim near,

"You are wasting strength in building here,

Your journey will end with the ending day,

You never again must pass this way.

You have crossed the chasm, deep and wide,

Why build you the bridge at eventide?"

The builder lifted his old gray head,

"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,

“There followeth after me today,
A youth whose feet must pass this way.
This chasm that has been naught to me
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim,
Good friend I am building the bridge for *him*.”

– Will Allen Dromgoole

[No. 60, p. 7]

[B]ecause I place a higher value on liberty than anything else, I do not believe that I or anyone else has the right to *force* men to be charitable. In other words, I am not against *charity* but I *am* against the use of force. – Robert Ringer

[No. 61, p. 6]

We call our schools free because we are not free to stay away from them until we are sixteen years of age. – Robert Frost

[No. 65, p. 4]

A Duty of Citizenship

“To provide the rudiments of education to the illiterate appears as an act of liberation. Nonetheless, [duties of citizenship] are distinctive in that they do not usually permit the individual to decide whether or not to avail himself of their advantages. ... In all Western societies elementary education has become a duty of citizenship, perhaps the earliest example of a prescribed minimum enforced by all the powers of the modern state. Two attributes of ...education make it into an element of citizenship: the government has authority over it, and the parents of all children ... are required by law to see to it that their children attend school.”

– Reinhard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (1964), pp. 87-88.

[No. 65, p. 4]

The aim of totalitarian education has never been to instill convictions, but to destroy the capacity to form any. – Hannah Arendt

[No. 65, p. 5]

Children are the living messages we send to a time we will not see. – John Whitehead

[No. 65, p. 5]

No other success can compensate for failure in the home.

[No. 65, p. 6]

To Risk ...

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach for another is to risk involvement.

To expose your ideas, your dreams, before a crowd is to risk their loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To live is to risk dying.

But risks must be taken, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing.

The people who risk nothing do nothing, have nothing, are nothing.

They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.

Chained by their attitudes, they are slaves;
they have forfeited their freedom.

Only a person who risks is free.

– Author Unknown

[No. 65, p. 7]

Let people keep their own money, eliminate the bureaucratic barriers to spontaneous family and community activity - and people will see to their own education. If that sounds romantic and unrealistic, it only illustrates how far we have been taken in by the religion of state, which teaches that we, the enlightened people, could not get along in even the simplest matters without our wise and benevolent governors. People taught their own children to read, write, and reckon for centuries without the help of government. but today we can't imagine how it could be done. And we call ourselves a free and independent people. – Sheldon Richman

[No. 73, p. 4]

Compulsory attendance laws require attendance not education. – Larry and Susan Kaseman

[No. 85, p. 2]

The antidote [to government] is the influence of private character, the growth of the individual. The appearance of character makes the State unnecessary. - Ralph Waldo Emerson

[No. 85, p. 4]

I am convinced that if I saved every ‘at-risk’ youth in America and lost one of my own, I would have failed in my primary mission. I am reminded of the old adage that “the family is the original Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.” You and I must raise children of valor who can distinguish right from wrong, truth from lies, and appreciate the nobility of life of courage, honest, and integrity. Only in this way can we secure the future. – Kay C. James

[No. 85, p. 5]

[I]f the current government were completely overthrown, the present American slave mentality would only erect another system of slavery. – Franklin Sanders

[No. 89, p. 5]

Do all parents make the best choices for their children? Of course not. We don’t live in a perfect world. But we should live in a free country – one in which each of us is free to make his own choices, good or bad. And those parents who *are* capable of making good choices shouldn’t have their children held as hostages in government schools because other parents are less competent. – Harry Browne

[No. 90, p. 4]

Light houses don’t ring bells to call attention to their light. They just shine.

[No. 94, p. 4]

What should make you suspicious about [public] School is its relentless compulsion. Why should this rich, brawling, utterly successful nation ever have needed to resort to *compulsion* to order people into school classes – unless advocates of forced-schooling were driven by peculiar philosophical beliefs not commonly shared. – John Taylor Gatto

[No. 110, p. 5]

To educate is not the function of the state, and we do not recognize the right of the state to tax its citizens for support of schools to which they cannot in conscience send their children, or have no children to send. It is no more business of the state to educate our children than to feed or clothe them, and it has no more right to make the education, than it has the support of the children, a tax on property. Education is the right and duty of parents, and to take it away from them and to give it the state is to strike a severe blow at the sacredness of the family, the basis of society. – Orestes Brownson

[No. 111, p. 2]

My husband and I have always believed that God has given responsibility to the parents for a child's education. Whether you put them in a public school or a private school or you teach them at home, what they learn is ultimately your responsibility. – Lucy Anne Adams

[No. 109, p. 2]

Any education that is free at the point of delivery is bound to be a means of social engineering. – Jan Fortune-Wood

[No. 118, p. 4]

Even the most benign states have made the most extraordinary demands on those they have claimed as their subjects: to sequester their children in state institutions for thirty hours a week, to dispose of their bodily wastes in only prescribed ways, to treat their sick with exclusively state-licensed healers, to prove a proprietary relationship to land solely through state-issued deeds, and so on. – Joel Migdal

[No. 127, p. 6]

[T]he main hope of saving our country really boils down to home education. – Robert Ringer

[No. 129, p. 7]

[T]he unit of society is the family. ... [W]e must have a sense of personal responsibility to take care of our own. ... "It is not the function of the state to enter into these realms." ... He who is a pensioner of the state is a slave of the state. – Peter Maurin

[No. 133, p. 7]

If you ever wonder if a bureaucrat has the "right" to do something, then just ask yourself this question: "Does my neighbor have the right to do this to me?" – Marc Stevens

[No. 135, p. 5]

I get so frustrated when I speak at a seminar and the first question is "But is it legal?" Who *cares* if it is legal? If it's right, do it. We've raised a culture of people who want to ask permission to scratch their nose. We need to examine what is *right*, and then *do* it. – Joel Salatin

[No. 138, p. 5]

Public school is the enemy of the family – Carolyn Chute in Bill Kauffman, *Look Homeward, America* (2006), p. 122.

[No. 146, p. 5]

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The Voluntaryist website with back issues of *The Voluntaryist* and information about Mr. Watner's books is at www.voluntaryist.com.

