

Liberty

Killing as Therapy

by Thomas Szasz

May 1990

Vol 3, No 5

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Of Smokestacks and Rhinos Economists *vs.* Environmentalists

by Robert Higgs

A Population Crisis?

by Jane S. Shaw

The Ecologic Disasters of Communism

by R. W. Bradford

The Decadence of Conservatism

by William P. Moulton

The Death of Thinking in the Schools

by Karl Hess

Also: *Leland Yeager* on Robert Bork,
Bill Kauffman on the patron saint of ecotage,
a dispute over isolationism, a dispatch from Swaziland,
and other articles and reviews.

"God grants Liberty only to those who live it, and are always ready to guard and defend it." — Webster

Letters

The Cost of Liberty

Liberty has arrived and, as usual, has disrupted my business, which will undoubtedly result in some dissatisfied customers in the coming week. Does eight hours seem like an inordinate amount of time to read *Liberty*? Ah well, I have justified the opportunity costs by reasoning that while learning that phenomenology is "the attempt to turn common experience into the ground of all philosophy and science without adding any presuppositions to this experience, just by categorizing the recurring forms and content of consciousness" may not make my business more productive, it may help me to get laid at the next libertarian conference I attend.

Stephen Cox ("Isolating the Error of Isolationism," March 1990) asks what reasoning would impose non-interventionism upon individuals defended by private defense forces. My reply would be the cost. If there had been private defense forces in 1917 and the people were billed monthly for the service, do you really think many troops would have even made it to foreign shores? If the cost had not been pushed into the future with the fraud of the federal reserve system, enough of us might have stayed home so that the European participants might have settled their differences without giving any of the parties a motive for World War II.

Mike Hall
Bonita Springs, Fla.

A Benefit of Liberty

R. W. Bradford's essay on H. L. Mencken did far more than obliterate the charges that Mencken was a racist. It introduced me to the Sage, and what a pleasure it has been to read Mencken, surely the finest writer in the American language and the most trenchant libertarian of them all.

T. J. Macchus
St. Louis, Mo.

No Intervention Without Representation

As a libertarian of principle, it is easy to isolate the error of "Isolating the Error of Isolationism" by Stephen Cox (March 1990). In his attack on "isolationism," Cox implies correctly that each individual is a self-owner but then ties self-owners together as "free people," collects them in "a society of free people," superimposes "our country" on top of that semantic creation and then banters about defending the right

of "our country" to engage in any military procedure deemed to be of "practical interest."

No one has the right to force his values on another. No one has the right to represent another without that individual's permission. Here lies the "moral ground" for "isolationism."

While George Bush believed that General Noriega was a dictator worthy of overthrow, I may not have, and he cannot force me to have the same opinion. If George Bush chooses to act on his beliefs, he cannot order me at gunpoint to help with the dirty deed. By the same token, he may not storm into Panama and proclaim himself liberator as sent by every man, woman and child in the United States, including those, like me, who were not party to his drug war fantasies.

These principles of libertarian morality apply equally to all conflict situations, past and present; including invasions of this country! For there may be among us pacifists who would rather die than raise the sword, and none of us has the right to force them to see it, or act, otherwise.

Is this a "just-let-them-destroy-themselves" position that would relegate all libertarians to sitting on their hands while tyrants destroy the world? Of course not. Individuals will respond—as individuals see fit, and they alone will be responsible for their actions. This is the principle of libertarian philosophy that prevents intervention by our government in other lands . . . and in our own land as well.

J. Powers Potter
Oneonta, N.Y.

A Choice in Interventionisms

Stephen Cox's well-reasoned piece on isolationism is convincing but for a glaring omission. How will "non-isolationists," however principled, be so sure of all objective facts in a given situation that they can mandate that others pay and die for what they perceive to be a just intervention?

Except in cases where individuals volunteer for foreign forces, the normal practice of intervention does not give soldiers a choice in the matter. A teenager may volunteer for the Army, but once in he (or now she) is not given a choice as to whether or not to die in Beirut or Panama or wherever Stephen Cox might send the poor schnook.

Interventions cost lots of money. Again, choice is denied. We will be taxed

to support them unless libertarian interventionists intend to set up bake sales to finance their just adventures abroad.

William G. Kelsey
Elgin, Texas

Isolating Three Isolationisms

Stephen Cox gives too much credit to the country-household analogy. National borders are not the boundaries of some individual's justly-acquired property, so real liberalism implies no duty to respect national borders. Intervention against a criminal government can be justified by the request of any one of its victims.

Radicals argue that foreign intervention must never be financed with taxation or manned by conscription, and that it must never kill innocent foreigners or destroy their property. Some take this to imply that government intervention must be banned, but only because they define government as an institution that initiates force.

Cox is right to put aside such anarchist word games. Even the strictest moral constraints imply only practical problems for a liberal defense force contemplating foreign intervention. And moderate liberalism accepts that the liberal ideal cannot be achieved immediately. Presumably, this includes foreign policy. So from both a radical and moderate liberal perspective, isolationism should be regarded as merely "one strategic option for a free society."

Isolationism combines noninterventionism, neutralism, and unilateralism, but each of these must be defended separately as a means to an appropriate end. Surely, the promotion and protection of liberty throughout the world is the end most consistent with real liberalism.

In an ideal world, universal liberalism would make foreign policy meaningless. So nonintervention in the internal affairs of other countries is a second best solution. If even nonliberal governments accept noninterventionism, the consequent world peace might do more for the spread of real liberalism than attempts to impose it by intervention. War is the health of the state, so noninterventionism is an appropriate strategic option for real liberals.

Neutralism rejects involvement in foreign wars. It is especially appropriate when most wars are between nonliberal governments. But aiding those attacked or occupied by a large and growing empire can be an appropriate means of protecting liberty. Perhaps neutralism should be the general strategic option for real liberalism, with exceptions for unusual circumstances.

Unilateralism rejects alliances. Permanent alliances with nonliberal governments tend to discredit liberalism. But alliances

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Liberty

R. W. Bradford
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Karl Hess
senior editors

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Ethan O. Waters
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contributing editors

Timothy Virkkala
assistant editor

Kathleen Bradford
copy editor

Brian Doherty
editorial assistant

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May 1990

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or confederations among liberal governments might be desirable. As Cox suggests, it depends on the context.

W. William Woolsey
Charleston, S.C.

And "Just War" is "Mere War"

I found your analyses of the invasion of Panama—"Operation Just Cause"—very interesting. However, the true rationale for the invasion has escaped even the usually astute editors of *Liberty*, as well as the world media, thanks to an inadvertently omitted punctuation mark. The correct title of the invasion was Operation Just 'Cause, as in:

Parent: Why did you beat up your little brother?

Child: 'Cause.

Parent: Because why?

Child: Just 'cause.

Stephen Lester
Glen Ridge, N.J.

Time for Libertarianism to File Chapter 11

I was unable to make out exactly what the hell John Hospers is getting at in his essay in the March 1990 *Liberty* ("Humanity vs. Nature"). In a past issue (September 1988) he advocated imposition of a world government to protect the environment, which might be a clue. I gather somebody named Callicott thinks people are vile and should mostly be dead. Hospers flutters his hands quite a bit at this, but thinks enough of the viewpoint that he does not quote Callicott so much as reprint him wholesale, to the extent that one wonders if Callicott should have gotten a chunk of the author's fee.

In passing, Hospers does perform the signal service of helping publicize the bottom line of environmental extremism—genocide, on a scale undreamed of by Stalin, Mao or that German amateur with the silly moustache.

What makes the Hospers piece so damned depressing is that it appears in an issue that also features Stephen Cox's impassioned plea for America to be the world's policeman (a government that will send 26,000 grunts to arrest some clown in Panama is sure going to scruple about kicking in *your* door, Steve), as well as straight-faced discussion of the notion that libertarians won't amount to anything until they agree with the late Judeo-Christian philosopher Ruhollah Khomeini that freedom means freedom to agree with the self-named godly. We even got a reminder or two of *Liberty's* comprehensive trashing of the nonaggression principle, a few numbers back.

It's pretty clear, isn't it? "Libertarians" now advocate world dictatorship, imperialism, morality police, and coercion in general. The movement is intellectually and morally bankrupt. "Libertarianism" isn't even going to outlive communism. It's dead, Jim.

Those few of us who still dare to believe in so unfashionable a thing as freedom will have to find a new name for our perversion.

Victor Milan
Albuquerque, N.M.

Paleolibertarianism: The Solution, Part 1

What would be the real difference in an individual's life should Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr.'s paleolibertarian views ("The Case for Paleolibertarianism," January 1990) prevail, between dealing with the Leviathan state we have today and dealing with the Leviathan church and the social authoritarians of Mr Rockwell's future? Does it really matter who sends the bully boys out to push the people around or what authority they use as their excuse to do the pushing?

Perhaps the problem is Mr Rockwell has read too much G. K. Chesterton. Maybe the solution is for him to read more H. L. Mencken.

Fred Schwartz
Maybrook, N.Y.

Paleolibertarianism: The Solution, Part 2

Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr.'s article is so good, please find a way to have it reprinted and spread all over America, yes, all over the thinking world. I've been libertarian since Clark opened the door, and I realized I wasn't the only person in the world who believed in individual liberty as long as other persons were not damaged. I returned from Central America (particularly Nicaragua, where *even under a dictatorship* I had found *far more freedom* than in my native America) nearly twenty years ago. Rockwell is absolutely right. We must expose everyone to his good thoughts to build a majority political party that will restore our liberty.

E. O. Sowerwine, Jr.
Wapiti, Wyo.

Sanctioning the Sanctions

I hope Leland Yeager's suggestion ("Reflections," March 1990) that the U. S. government and others impose a new constitution (and a king) on South Africa, with the threat of armed invasion, is a joke. But here's an idea for results "on the cheap" using the sanctions that are already in place.

1) Make a list of the sanctions; 2) make a list of goals; 3) tie each sanction to a goal;

and 4) if and when a goal is accomplished, lift the sanction that is tied to it.

The idea is to harness the forces of special interest politics. Example: If a particular sanction is hurting the mining companies, but it will be lifted as soon as travel restrictions on blacks are lifted, the industry might lobby for this one change. The textile lobby would see no harm in having the professions all opened to all races, and would pressure the government to do so—if it meant they could once more sell their product abroad.

If set up right, no one goal (change of law or policy) would be seen as such a blow to the system that it could not be successfully lobbied for. But step-by-step, the changes would bring the people to greater freedom.

Steve Gillman
Traverse City, Mich.

I'm a Welfare-Intellectual and I'm Okay

George Smith attacks welfare intellectuals ("Scholarship as Leechcraft," March 1990) but fails to name a single person, as if he were writing for a Samizdat in Stalinist Russia, fearing some terrifying repercussion. There is no reason he should not have named names.

Except, perhaps, one. He could not really come up with the goods against any target had he named one.

In particular, let George prove that I, who fit the formal characterization of the welfare intellectual, working as I do at a state university, have sold out, stopped working hard, or failed to be public in my opposition to public education. Notice that my first edited volume, *The Libertarian Alternative*, published in 1974 and prepared during my very first teaching job at a state university (California State College at Bakersfield), contained an essay by me against public education. I actually delivered that essay at a luncheon convocation held at Cal State Bakersfield during the first quarter I taught there, and my doing so was probably responsible for my not being rehired at the end of my two-year contract.

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Letters Policy

We invite readers to comment on articles that have appeared in *Liberty*. We reserve the right to edit for length and clarity. All letters are assumed to be intended for publication unless otherwise stated. Succinct, typewritten letters are preferred. Please include your phone number so that we can verify your identity.

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Letters (continued from page 4)

I mention my case only because I am intimately familiar with it. But I do know of others—Fred D. Miller Jr, Jeffrey Paul, Ellen Paul, Lester H. Hunt, J. Roger Lee, and numerous others—who are in the same fix as I, unable to find a position at a private university but by no means silent on the crucial issues or falling down on the job. Smith should have done a better job with this topic.

Tibor Machan
Auburn University, Ala.

A Parable of Context-Dropping

The letter by stormy MON in the March 1990 *Liberty* contains a classic example of quoting out of context. If you check the cited verse in Luke 19:27, you will discover that the lines spoken by Jesus were part of a parable he was relating about a king whose rule was being resisted by some of his subjects. It was the king in the story who said "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over thee, bring hither, and slay them before me." A cursory reading makes this fact so obvious that I can only infer that MON's intention was to deliberately mislead your readers.

Tim O'Brien
Madison Heights, Mich.

The Logic of the Language of Liberty

Rex F. May's paean in praise of Loglan (March 1990 Booknotes) both underestimates what natural languages can do and overestimates attempts by logicians to avoid the alleged flaws of natural languages by engineering new ones. He is mistaken in suggesting that linguists generally accept the "Sapir-Whorf hypothesis," the hypothesis that (in May's words) "the range of human thought is limited by the structure of language." A large number of different versions of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis have been entertained by various scholars in linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and philosophy, and the vast bulk of research on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis has been seriously misinterpreted. I draw May's attention to such studies as Paul Kay and Willett Kempton's "What is the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis?" (In *American Anthropologist* 1984), which argues that evidence supposedly showing that language influences how people perceive color really shows only that it influences how they recall their perceptions; they remember things at least partially in terms of categories that they have names for.

I know of no one in linguistics who accepts the idea that the structure of one's native language imposes limits on what thoughts one can think. There is wide-

spread acceptance among linguists only of versions of Sapir-Whorf in which language does not hinder thought but merely affects the relative costs of different thought. In these versions of Sapir-Whorf, one's languages (not just one's native language) provide convenient pegs to hang things on and thereby make it less costly to think in terms of concepts for which the pegs are already there, with the caveat that if you want more mental pegs you can create them easily.

Languages differ not in what they allow you to say or to think but in what they allow you not to say (and maybe think). English forces you to put every noun in either a singular or a plural form and thus to commit yourself about whether you're talking about one thing or more than one, while Japanese doesn't have separate singular and plural forms and thus lets you be noncommittal (though if you want to commit yourself, it provides vocabulary with which you can do so easily). It was a real *tour-de-force* for Chelsea Quinn Yarbro to write a story ("Allies") in which the reader can't tell which characters are men and which are women, but that would be no achievement at all in Hungarian, where there is no distinction of gender in pronouns, nouns or adjectives. This doesn't mean that Hungarians are any less aware of the difference between men and women than English-speakers are, nor that Hungarian men are any less sexist than American or English men.

May's statement that "if your language lacks a future tense, it's hard to think in terms of the future" is simply false; all languages have simple ways of referring to the future, but they don't necessarily use tenses of verbs for that purpose. Speakers of English are no better at thinking in terms of the future than are speakers of Chinese, which has no tense forms at all, nor any worse than speakers of Kikuyu, which has distinct near future and remote future tenses.

The supposedly desirable features of Loglan that May cites either are shared by natural languages such as English or are of dubious value. Loglan has words for "and" and "or"; English has words for "and" and "or" too, namely *and* and *or*. There are so few occasions when someone other than a mathematician has reason to say "if and only if" that it is no hardship to express it with four short words (each with its normal meaning: "If and only if" means exactly what the words say) instead of with the single Loglan word that May says means "if and only if."

However, Loglan *o* doesn't really mean "if and only if," because its meaning is symmetric and the meaning of "if and only

if" isn't: if you interchange the two clauses that "if and only if" connects, you reverse the temporal and causal connections between them, e.g. "I get angry if and only if people waste my time" says something quite different from "People waste my time if and only if I get angry."

Logicians have gotten away with spreading the fairy tale that "if and only if" is symmetric only because they focus on examples whose parts have no temporal or causal connections and which thus have nothing to be reversed, and because logic classes are often conducted more like prayer meetings than serious intellectual discussions.

May's statement that "if" should be easily reducible to a logical set of truth-conditions shows how sheltered an existence he has led: he has only looked at "if" in the Mickey Mouse examples that logicians often confine their attention to. The analysis of "if" that he and his logician idols advocate makes it implausibly easy for "if" sentences to be true and can be reconciled only through massive legerdemain with the ways that "if" is commonly used. There are in fact raging controversies among logicians as to the truth conditions of "if" sentences, as is obvious by a glance at such books as *Ifs* (ed. by William Harper *et al*, Reidel, 1981). May seriously misrepresents the field of logic when he speaks as if logicians were in unanimous agreement about the points of logic that he touches on.

Finally, I am appalled at May's concluding paragraph, in which he says that "we in the libertarian movement aspire to think logically, and would like it a lot if other people would give it a try [sic]" and suggests that Loglan might provide "a solution to human irrationality."

Totalitarians don't think any less logically than libertarians; they just hold premises that most libertarians find loathsome. Indeed, if anything, a libertarian society makes far fewer demands on rationality than does a totalitarian society; in a totalitarian society, the state must devise intricate plans for the most minute details of everything that is to happen, and its subjects must devise equally intricate plans to thwart the dictates of the state. But in a libertarian society, rationality benefits from a division of labor, and both producers and consumers can get by most of the time simply relying on massive trial and error. It is ridiculous to blame human irrationality on the supposed flaws of natural languages: it is laziness and cowardice, not design flaws in languages, that inhibit people from considering alternatives to their cherished ideas or from exploring the consequences of those ideas.

James D. McCawley
University of Chicago, Ill.

Reflections

Urine the clear — The war on drugs has spawned numerous new drug-testing programs in American businesses and state and federal agencies. This has created opportunities for entrepreneurs in the drug testing business and for those who seek to defeat them. Jeff Nightbyrd, of Austin, Texas, has begun marketing dehydrated urine. For \$19.95, he will send two guaranteed drug-free vials. All one has to do is mix the product with warm water, and voila! Pure urine. The drawback is that one must mix the urine with water clandestinely, and if the company uses observers to guarantee that the specimen one turns in is genuine, this won't be possible. Also, since most tests are not announced beforehand, one must keep the vials handy at all times. But the power of human imagination is unlimited, and testees will no doubt find ways around any difficulties. Like the radar detector, dehydrated urine is another example of the innovative spirit of the unregulated free market, and the imagination of people seeking to outwit unjust laws. —JSR

Mendacity: our first line of defense — Anyone who thinks the state is interested in the truth should read Defense Secretary Dick Cheney's comments about CIA Director William Webster. In early March, Webster told Congress that even if a Stalinist succeeded Gorbachev as head of the USSR, it would be nearly impossible for that country to threaten the United States, because the domestic problems associated with the reversal would be too great. On the same day, Cheney was trying to sell his budget to Congress by saying that everything Gorbachev is doing could easily be reversed, imperiling the free world once again.

Who's right? Cheney implied that Webster is: the next day he didn't contradict Webster, he merely pointed out that such statements make it hard to persuade Congress to give him all the money he wants. "It creates problems," Cheney said. I hope so. —SLR

East Germans vote — March 18 was a beautiful spring day in eastern Germany, all the more beautiful because residents had their first chance to vote in a free election since 1933. Over 93% of eligible voters took advantage of their opportunity. The results of the election were beautiful also: a clear repudiation of socialism and the alliance with the Soviet Union and a clear call for unity with West Germany and non-socialist western Europe.

The results came as something of a surprise to many Westerners. Only a few weeks ago, the polls showed the Social Democratic Party with a huge lead. The SDP calls for "democratic socialism" and is inclined toward political neutrality.

Reunification is a foregone conclusion. More than 75% of voters voted for what amounted to West German political

parties, with the Christian Democrats capturing a larger share of the vote in East Germany than they did in their most recent election in West Germany. "No doubt we're the big losers in this election," said SDP leader Markus Meckel; the leader of West Germany's Christian Democratic Union called the returns a "dream result."

What does this mean for the outlook for liberty? It's likely that Germany will be a freer place as a result, that the risk of war will be less and that the military spending may decline. All these are laudable. But the election was a partial victory for liberty at best: Germany, like the rest of western Europe, remains committed to a severely hampered market economy, with the state providing subsidies from taxpayers for inefficient industries and for people who lack the inclination to support themselves. —RWB

Killing as therapy — Last December in Panama, hundreds of persons—Americans as well as Panamanians—were killed in a war, ostensibly on drugs. However, no drugs were killed. Welcome to the Therapeutic State.

The invasion of Panama and the kidnapping of its head of state strengthen my long-standing suspicion that the War on Drugs poses the greatest threat to personal liberty we have faced in our entire two-hundred year history. Crowd madnnesses—like the Children's Crusade or the witch craze—ought to be matters for serious reflection and perhaps hilarity over the boundlessness of human credulity. But the American drug craze is not some collective folly in the dim past. It is no laughing matter. On the contrary, it is a deadly dangerous exercise in populist scapegoating, a type of mass persecution historically endemic to many parts of the world, but from which the American people have, until recently, been spared. But no longer.

When all is said and done, what has made the United States a safe haven for the weak and the oppressed? The answer is due process: The American political system rests on a sound tradition of according legal protections against accusations of wrongdoing by *persons*. The State may call a person dangerous—but it cannot deprive him of liberty, unless it can prove him guilty of a crime. But the American political system accords no similar legal protections against wrongdoing by *drugs*.

However, the State may, and can, call a drug dangerous and remove it from the market, and there isn't anything any of us can do about it. Thus, all that the demagogues who are in charge of the Therapeutic State need to do is declare a particular drug the embodiment of Transcendent Evil, and presto, we have the perfect modern, democratic, humanitarian scapegoat. This *pharmakos* (Greek for scapegoat) is not a person, so why worry about "its" rights? It is "dangerous," even lethal, so what rational person can come to its defense?

It is bad for everyone and good for nothing, so who is harmed by prohibiting access to it?

Emile Zola aroused the world when he cried, *J'accuse!* But Dreyfus was a man, a human being for whom people could feel compassion. Cocaine is a drug. Who can feel compassion for a chemical?

It seems to me that decent people appalled by the War on Drugs are stymied, at least for the moment, and had better recognize it. For this war is but an inexorable manifestation of the cancerous growth of the Therapeutic State—a monster to which the American people now look as their Savior, but which, in fact, can only prove to be their destroyer. The Argentinean poet Adolfo Bioy Caseres glimpsed sight of this crowd madness:

Well, then, maybe it would be worth mentioning the three periods of history. When man believed that happiness was dependent upon God, he killed for religious reasons. When man believed that happiness was dependent upon the form of government, he killed for political reasons. After dreams that were too long, true nightmares . . . we arrived at the present period of history. Man woke up, discovered that which he always knew, that happiness is dependent upon health, and began to kill for therapeutic reasons.

Despite all the rhetoric to the contrary, no one is, or can be, killed by an illegal drug. Drugs don't kill people. People kill people. If a person dies as a result of deciding to use a powerful drug (legal or illegal), it is because he has done something risky. Thus, some deaths from (illegal) drug use may be accidents, some indirect suicides, some direct suicides. Although suicide and murder both result in death (as do many other human behaviors), they are as different from one another as masturbation from rape. The one you do to yourself, the other someone else does to you.

Drug "abuse," like food "abuse," injures or kills only the "abuser." Whereas drug law abuse—the criminalization of the free market in drugs we call the War on Drugs—injures

Last December in Panama, hundreds of persons—Americans as well as Panamanians—were killed in a war, ostensibly on drugs. However, no drugs were killed. Welcome to the Therapeutic State.

and kills indiscriminately user and "abuser" alike. Many have already been killed by impure drugs, because of the adulteration of a criminalized product ("dope"); by bullets, because of gang wars and the persecution of drug distributors ("pushers"); and by AIDS, because of the criminalization of hypodermic syringes and needles ("drug paraphernalia").

Many more will surely be killed in the name of this Holy War that promises to purify America and make it "drug-free." Neither the craze nor the carnage will cease until enough Americans, in all walks of life, come to their senses and say: Enough!

—TSS

Propping the paleos — I thought Llewelyn H. Rockwell, Jr.'s polemic ("The Case for Paleolibertarianism,"

January 1990) so cogently argued that I knew immediately where to disagree with him—on issues VII, VIII & X (though not IX, still favoring Western culture much as I favor the missionary position, for the same reason—it makes me feel comfortable). I didn't think about his polemic again until the symposium of responses in the March *Liberty*. You see, I live among artists who consider themselves liberty-loving and yet "left," who acknowledge a knee-jerk devotion to "socialism," any socialism other than Russian. In their presence I must argue that the cultural liberties so important to them are best realized, as well as best-protected, under capitalism, which unfortunately is no more acceptable to them than "free enterprise" or its variants. They become, in my own mind, half-assed libertarians. I had a similar response to reading Rockwell, half-assed from the other side, reluctant to see that free enterprise generally benefits from freedom elsewhere in life. The trouble with half-assed people is that they can't sit straight, even if their deficiencies draw a lot of attention, and thus must be forever propped up.

—RK

The Dirty Dozen — Now that War Prisoner Manuel Noriega is going to trial, the question arises: Can he get a jury of his peers? How many other drug-dealing dictators are there? Anastasio Somoza and the Shah of Iran are dead, so they can't do it. Daniel Ortega and Fidel Castro are Noriega's friends, so that disqualifies them. President Najibullah of Afghanistan and Muamar Khadaffi come to mind, but they are prejudiced against the prosecution, so they can't serve either. Perhaps a number of drug gang leaders (Noriega's private sector equivalent) could do the job, so long as it can be shown that they did not suffer commercial setbacks from Noriega's arrest. But it might be best not to bother with a jury trial, and to let a tribunal of judges assess guilt or innocence. It worked at Nuremburg.

—JSR

Munchkins of the world, unite! — Revolutionary communism is dead in the water. The Soviet Union has abandoned one-party rule; the Berlin Wall is down and Germany is to reunite itself; communist parties throughout Eastern Europe have abandoned power or had it torn from them; and those lovable Sandinistas made the fatal error of holding an election that they couldn't fix. People the world over have looked at these events with amazement, pleasure, and hope for a happier, more free future. Right?

Wrong, as I've recently discovered to my chagrin and annoyance. A few true-life horror stories have reminded me that not every one has the sense of good will, or just plain good sense, to be pleased by these developments.

I was browsing one afternoon at a used book store, one whose window is festooned with newspaper clippings about U.S. involvement in El Salvador and the like, when a middle aged customer with a salt-and-pepper beard and bad posture began a conversation with the store's proprietor. After a few social niceties, the customer lowered his voice. Recent liberalizations in the Soviet Union—the end of one-party rule, the apparent abandonment of the old fervor for world communist revolution—were just tearing him up inside, he said. With the Soviet Union out of the revolution business, who was going to lend support, encouragement and, most of all weapons, to all the brave heroes the world over who were

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Program Highlights . . .

Not all editors have decided what they will talk about, but here are a few scheduled seminars and papers:

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still fighting for a more humane, rational human future? Brave heroes like the governments of Angola and Cuba, the ANC, the Sandinistas, the FMLN? They'd just be left twisting in the wind. Indeed, the possibility of political and economic freedom for the citizens of the Soviet Union meant sure ruin for the future. Who was going to save the world now?

As I said, all this was communicated in a tortured whisper that I was barely able to hear. I was tempted to inform him that he wasn't in his beloved Angola or Cuba; he could feel free to say whatever he wanted without fear. As the conversation turned to how today's generation is going to have to real-

Americans who have made a cottage industry out of advocating tyranny in the name of "solidarity with the people of Central America" or "fighting for international social justice," or misplaced their emotional energy in that dubious enterprise, are finding their little worlds crashing around them.

ize, just as their's (the customer and proprietor's) did, that life in bourgeois capitalism is "empty" and "no way for humans to live," I bought my Ezra Pound books and went home.

But even home held no respite. The day after the Nicaraguan elections, when the Sandinistas were given the boot by those whom they had oppressed and whose economy they had helped ruin, my roommate asked me who had won.

"The Sandinistas are outta there," I replied.

He was inconsolable. He puttered around the house for minutes muttering "Damn," and "God, that sucks," and other politically and ethically astute comments on the democratic passage of a decade of "revolutionary" tyranny.

Those Americans who have made a cottage industry out of advocating tyranny in the name of "solidarity with the people of Central America" or "fighting for international social justice," or misplaced their emotional energy in that dubious enterprise, are finding their little worlds crashing around them. Perhaps they are merely well-meaning and ignorant. But they can't help but remind me of vicious little munchkins who felt a deep twinge of regret at the death of the Wicked Witch because—for some confused, twisted reason of their own—they took a hidden delight in watching her cause misery for the rest of their kind. —BD

Out of the mainstream — "Not since before the Second World War has the United States been as peripheral on the world stage as it is now." This opening line of a recent *New Yorker* "Talk of the Town" section introduced the claim that the U. S. is standing on the sidelines while events in Eastern Europe hold center stage.

The sentence could hardly be further from the truth. The U. S. is not on center stage, but that is because it is the "city on a hill" that Ronald Reagan always talked about—the beacon of freedom and symbol of hope. The turmoil in Eastern Europe attests to the universal longing for freedom, and the

existence of our relatively free economy confirms that such freedom can exist. By wagging its tongue at the U. S. for being "peripheral," the *New Yorker* is, in my view, entirely off the mark.

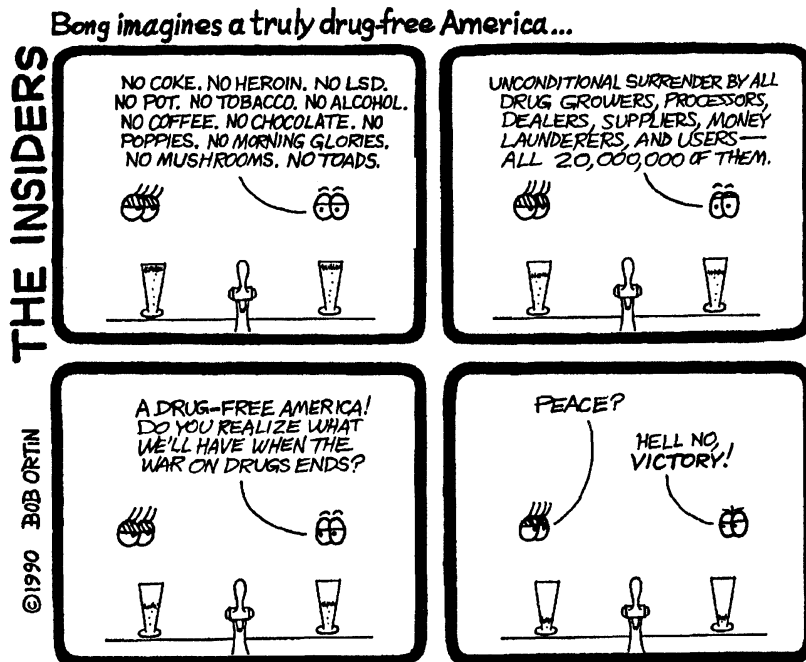
I was also jarred by a recent *Newsweek* article that began: "The pell-mell pursuit of profits by businesses has long been a major source of pollution. But could such greed be used instead to help preserve the environment?"

Now, it is true that pollution is caused by the failure of individuals and groups to pay the full social cost of their activities, and I don't expect a *Newsweek* reporter to understand that the absence of property rights is the immediate cause. What bothers me is that the words drip with misunderstanding and hatred—misunderstanding of profits and hatred of the system that makes *Newsweek* (for example) possible, a system that Eastern Europeans, among millions of others, long for.

As a writer and as a director of a conference for writers, I spend a fair amount of time trying to dispel misunderstanding, but sometimes I simply don't know how to communicate across the abyss. And as for hatred, I don't know if there's much you can do about it.

On the other hand, I recently came across a commentary that cheered me up. Randal O'Toole is a long-haired computer maven who makes his living as a consultant to environmental groups, criticizing Forest Service timber-cutting plans. In his magazine, *Forest Watch*, he recently wrote: "If you had told me in 1980 that I would end the decade as a near-libertarian economist, I would have laughed in your face."

"In 1980, I blamed all the deficiencies in the markets on greed and big business and thought that government should correct these deficiencies with new laws, regulatory agencies, rational planning, and trade and production restrictions. When that didn't work, I continued to blame the failure on greed and big business." But, he goes on, "I was immersed in the planning processes of one government agency for ten years (sort of like taking a Berlitz course in bureau-speak)." [He also attended a few conferences with economists such as



Terry Anderson and Richard Stroup.] "I learned that the decisions made by government officials often ignored the economic and other analyses done by planners. So much for rational planning. Their decisions also often went counter to important laws and regulations. So much for a democratic government . . . I gradually developed a new view of the world that recognized the flaws in government as well as the flaws in markets."

O'Toole still thinks that the flaws in the market are as bad as the flaws in government, but perhaps in another ten years that perspective will change as well. Is there hope for the *New Yorker* and *Newsweek*? —JSS

Sold to an American! — I have been hearing, recently, numerous radio advertisements for government auctions of goods and real property seized from drug dealers. The announcer hails the great deals available—cars for cheap, a house for \$100, etc.—and gloats over the things that honest citizens can get from evil drug dealers. The advertisements are at once enticing and sickening. Sickening *because* they are enticing, perhaps. I don't know if the auctions provide the best way for confiscatory governments to maximize revenue, but I suspect they may very well increase support for the war on drugs by fanning the fires of greed and envy—or, to use the words of the economists, by turning rent-seeking citizens against profit-seeking drug dealers.

As I listen to the ads, I try to imagine how I might justify going to one of these auctions, or, more interestingly, what I might do while I am there. For each Mittyesque action I try to imagine the *reactions* of the fence (I mean, government auctioneer). What would he do if, after outbidding everyone else for a fleet of boats, cars, etc., I tried to settle accounts by paying in crisp, clean \$100 bills? —TWV

We will bury the environment — The full extent of pollution and outright environmental damage in socialist countries is only now becoming known, as *perestroika* enables Westerners to get news from behind the iron curtain. That news is very bad indeed:

- In the village of Mölbus in East Germany, the level of sulfur dioxide in the atmosphere was measured by scientists at more than *double* the level that would mandate evacuation of the entire population of the area if it were detected in West Germany.

- The Blue Danube is no longer very blue. As it winds its way through Eastern Europe, most cities dump their sewage into it without any treatment whatever. So do state-owned breweries, steel mills, sugar refineries, paper mills, chemical plants, canneries, mineral processing plants, cement works, and petroleum mills.

- More than 34 *billion* pounds of sulfur is spewed into the atmosphere each year in Eastern Europe. In Budapest, a 75-year-old pensioner waiting in line for an opportunity to spend 15 minutes in an "inhalatorium"—a closet the size of a telephone booth filled with clean air—says, "In this part of the world, nobody takes breathing for granted." Elsewhere in Hungary, people go to caves when the air pollution is especially bad.

- In northern Czechoslovakia, the air is so polluted that one woman says, "You cannot hang your clothes outside. If

you do, they will be filthy before they are dry."

- Near Copsa-Mica in Romania, shepherds tend flocks of black sheep, their color the result of airborne soot from a rubber factory four miles away.

- In Cracow, where acid rain has eaten the noses and fingers off statues in public places, the Mayor describes the Vistula River as "nothing but a sewer, unfit for human use" and observes, "The damage caused by 45 years of Communism is staggering."

But the worst case is in the Soviet Union, where the damage isn't accidental. It is the result of deliberate government planning.

As fishing boats sit rusting in the desert that was once the shoreline of the Aral Sea, refrigerator trains arrive from Murmansk, the Arctic port near the border with Finland, 1,750 miles away. They carry fish to provide 900 jobs in a cannery in the city of Muynak.

Muynak once produced 3 percent of the Soviet Union's annual catch. Now it and the other fishing cities of the Aral sit miles from the remnant of the sea. The fishing industry that provided 60,000 jobs in 1960 no longer exists. The Aral Sea has shrunk by more than 40% in less than 30 years, thanks to Soviet diversion of water from the Amu and the Syr Rivers. Nearly 11,000 square miles of sea was transformed into a salt-encrusted desert. Meanwhile, Soviet planners talk about building dikes to create artificial lakes in the seabed.

The murder of the Aral Sea was part of a grand socialist enterprise, long cited by socialism's advocates as a model of achievement. In 1918, the Soviet leadership decreed that its empire must be self-sufficient in cotton. By concentrating their efforts, the Soviets were able to achieve this "miracle." They did it by diverting water for hundreds of miles to areas near the Soviet borders with Iran and Afghanistan.

In the village of Mölbus in East Germany, the level of sulfur dioxide in the atmosphere was measured by scientists at more than double the level that would mandate evacuation of the entire population of the area if it were detected in West Germany.

Soviet planners now acknowledge that they are killing the Aral Sea and destroying the social fabric of those who live around it. The damage could be stopped—even reversed, to some extent—by stopping the diversion of water. But hundreds of miles away along the borders of Iran and Afghanistan, people are dependent on the use of irrigated water for growing cotton. The Kara Kum Canal could be rebuilt so that it didn't leak so much, but that would cost a great deal of money. "Without water, the future is dim for Central Asia," says Viktor Dukhonnyni, director of the Central Asian Scientific Research Institute for Irrigation. "We need water not only for the population and farms but also for industrial development. The intellectuals sitting at desks understand the ecological slogans, but they fail to understand the needs of the people working on the farms."

As for the future of the Aral Sea: "With improvements to the irrigation system, we can give back to the Aral 21 cubic kilometers of water a year by 2005. That is the best we can do."

Unfortunately, 21 cubic km per year is only two thirds the amount required to keep the Aral Sea stable at its current, much diminished size.

Libertarians have long understood that environmental pollution occurs where property rights are poorly defined and enforced. It is therefore not surprising to learn that the worst pollution occurs behind the Iron Curtain, where law and official policy disdain private property entirely. (Ironically, the same socialist countries in which these environmental calamities have occurred have the strongest environmental laws in the world—just as their constitutions boast stringent guarantees of freedom of speech.)

Once again, we see how a centrally managed system can succeed in achieving an impressive goal by concentrating resources and efforts on a single problem and ignoring the costs. The Soviet Union became an exporter of cotton ("white gold," the planners triumphantly called it) by concentrating resources to build massive public works projects (e.g. huge dams and the Kara Kum, the world's longest—and perhaps leakiest—canal). But they ignored the cost of deploying those resources.

Such a thing could never happen in a genuinely free economy. The promulgators of the project would have been sued

The Aral Sea has shrunk by more than than 40% in less than 30 years, thanks to Soviet diversion of water. Nearly 11,000 square miles of sea was transformed into a salt-encrusted desert. Meanwhile, Soviet planners talk about building dikes to create artificial lakes in the seabed and ship freight trains of fish in from the Arctic Ocean for the local cannery to process.

by those it damaged for such huge sums that they would have been stopped dead in their tracks. In a free economy, costs must be paid by those responsible. But it happens in non-socialist countries when property rights are ignored. The U.S. has its own "white gold" program—enormous amounts of water are used to grow cotton on desert or desert-like land in California, thanks to the Bureau of Reclamation, at taxpayers' expense. The fertilizer runoff from our "white gold" program has found its way into the water at the Kesterson Wildlife Refuge in California, causing deformities in birds. The farmers have no property right to the water: they must use it for farming or lose it. So despite the fact that people and cities are crying for water—rather than deformed birds or subsidized cotton—the "white gold" program continues.

The Soviet experience in central Asia leaves the socialists with the same sort of problem the U.S. faces with Social Security, one of its experiments in government planning. It is widely acknowledged that Social Security is a Ponzi scheme—that it takes from one generation to give to another—under the assumption that it can always find another generation to pay off the current one when it becomes old. It is also understood that the current generation is receiving benefits far out of proportion to its own "contributions" and that, given the increasing life span and the much larger size of

the younger generation, there is little hope that those who are working today will ever enjoy the kind of windfall that today's "senior citizens" enjoy.

But the system is in place and the political costs of cutting the flow of cash to today's retirees would be too great to make significant changes in the system. It would "cause too much hardship" to current beneficiaries of the plan.

And so, just as the Social Security system rolls on in the U.S., despite the disaster that the Baby Boom generation will face early in the next century, the "miracle" of "white gold" continues in the USSR, despite the ecologic disaster that it is causing today.

Meanwhile, the Aral Sea lies dying, and nothing will be done to save it.

—RWB

The abominable lawmen — In 1978, state representative Paul Rosenbaum of Michigan sponsored a new anti-narcotics statute which, he boasted, would give the Wolverine State the toughest drug law of any state. The law passed by a wide margin, and Mr Rosenbaum got his wish. According to the National Criminal Justice Association, only Alabama comes close in terms of severity. The centerpiece of the law provides that anyone found in possession of over 650 grams of any substance containing heroin or cocaine (any amount of the substances will suffice as long as the whole exceeds the specified weight) must be sentenced to life in prison without parole. No judicial discretion is permitted. No probation, no suspension, no delayed sentencing, and, as mentioned, no chance of parole. In theory the governor could commute such a sentence, but this has never happened, and the state's current governor has a policy, publicly stated, of never commuting any sentence.

At its passage, it was claimed by all concerned that this provision would rid the state of drug "kingpins," since only they would be holding such quantities of happy powders.

What has, in fact, been the result of this barbaric statute? According to the results of a long investigation by the Detroit *Free Press*, the following are the fruits of Michigan's "kingpin" drug law: 1) Even by a very elastic definition, no "kingpins" have been convicted under the 650 gram provision. The reason? Persons caught with really large amounts of illicit drugs are almost always, under long standing policy, tried in the federal courts. There the penalty, though severe, is at least finite. Typically, a major domestic dealer might receive from 10 to 20 years. Those caught with lesser but still large amounts are usually well-enough placed that they are able to offer info on higher-ups and thus plea-bargain themselves into the federal system. Sentences for such mid-level distributors seldom exceed five to seven years. Whom does this leave at the mercy of the "anti-kingpin" law? Obscure little nobodies. So-called mules or street delivery men (and women). People who agreed to pick up a package at the airport for a friend. Seventeen-year-olds who were talked into making one or two deliveries for some extra bucks. A man given \$100 to act as lookout in a parking lot. (This makes you a principal. You don't have to touch the stuff.) Women hounded by boyfriends to hide cocaine in their apartments until things cool off. These sort of people. Small-time losers. 2) Since the law can't be applied to those under 16, major dealers have recruited many 13- and 14-year-olds into the drug distribution system.

Someone risking a couple of years in reform school doesn't have to be paid as much as one who is risking his whole future. 3) The number of convictions under the law keeps growing. From 1978 through 1984 an average of about 2 a year were sent up. Now the average is 50 to 60 *per annum* and growing. So much for wiping out the drug trade.

According to the *Free Press* investigation, many legislators privately find the law and its skewed application abhorrent. Few, however, have the courage to risk being labelled "soft on drugs" come the next election. To date, the occasional attempt to amend the law in the direction of leniency or judicial discretion has died in committee.

My opinion of representative democracy, never very high to begin with, is lowered still further by situations such as this. —WPM

Subsidized mediocrity — I liked Karl Hess's "Defense of Elitism" (January 1990) until he got to a subject I happen to know very well—the granting biases of the National Endowment for the Arts. As Hess has it, the NEA "appears committed to supporting the least elite artists in the realm. Let someone appear with a well-written grant to display scribbles or scrabbles that would stand no chance in a free-market setting, and the National Endowment rushes to oblige." Hess assumes that the NEA exists to support way-

out (i.e., avant-garde) work and has indeed done so "particularly in painting, music and poetry." Unfortunately, he is not alone; most libertarians seem to believe this. James S. Robbins, for instance, remarks in the following issue ("Beyond Irrelevance," March 1990, p. 45) that *all* libertarians seem "fed up with modern art, something which only persists because of Federal funding."

As a frequent NEA applicant who does art that is customarily regarded as unfamiliar, as conceptually challenging, as avant-garde—work that Philistines might regard as "scribbles or scrabbles"—let me tell you, comrades, would that what you imagine were so. What the NEA has actually supported over the years, predominantly, has been mediocre, conventional work by nonentities. In the same mail as Hess's article came a form letter from the director of the NEA's literature program telling me and over 2,000 others that our applications did not succeed. Attached was an alphabetical winners' list of 97 names, identified by place of residence and literary category in which they applied. Though I have a fairly encyclopedic knowledge of contemporary writing, especially on its experimental fringes, I found only seven names familiar to me on the entire list, only one of whom could be identified as an experimentalist. If Hess or others think they can do better with this winners' list, let me reprint the last 10 names:

Nadja Tesich, New York, prose; Peter D. Turchi, Warrenville, IL, prose; Charles D. van Wey, Seattle, WA, prose; John E. Vemon, Vestal, NY, prose; David A. Walton, Pittsburgh, PA, prose; Marilyn N. Waniek, Mansfield Center, CT, poetry; William Wiser, Denver, CO, prose; Lili H. White, Corning, NY, poetry; Lawrence M. Yep, prose; David R. Young, Beloit, WI, prose.

Since I don't know these people, I cannot tell for sure what they do; but since I know the work of most of the judges choosing them, I'd be willing to wager my dollars against Hess's donuts that none of the winners (or the panelists selecting them) do anything that Hess or any other reader of this magazine would judge as radically unacceptable—absolutely none of them.

Why NEA rewards should favor mediocrity year after year has something to do with the allegedly "democratic" procedures that go into panel-selecting, focusing upon the stylistically acceptable (even when choosing "minority" panelists) while eliminating representatives from the artistic extremes. (For more substantial grants, such as those to museums, the panelists tend to be more responsible, precisely because, as I noted in my own article in the same *Liberty*, in this category government funders want to support not the unknown but the very well-known, the meager occasional awards to "emerging" individuals purportedly justifying, you see, the larger annual grants to "major" institutions controlled by Rockefeller and the like.)

Hess continues, "The off chance that the work is unworthy and that not even the passage of time could redeem it is, thus, struck from discussion by an essentially elitist decision." The first part of the sentence is true, but the rationale for such NEA disinterest in posterity or any other standards is definitely *anti-elitist*.

It is odd that Hess should mention Van Gogh as an example of an artist who succeeded in spite of neglect, because Van

Guest Reflection:

Green Mountain Revolution . . . — I

was listening to the radio sometime back, and the announcer told about Vermont's Bicentennial, which was coming up next year. Their Bicentennial Commission came up with the idea of promoting how wonderful the union was and how great statehood was, by sponsoring "debates" on Vermont Secession. According to the radio program, some professor jumped on the issue, wrote a book favoring secession, and leapt to the forefront in the debates.

The radio station played excerpts from the first debate in Bennington, the only one of seven yet held. The defender of the union—a Vermont supreme court justice—was left with banalities about acid rain and the need for big government to cure big problems. The radio station didn't play back the professor's arguments. Instead it played an impassioned plea based on the wonderful window of opportunity of the secessionist movements in eastern Europe and the USSR. The arguments he offered must have been convincing—and must have found fertile soil in the citizenry—because the secessionist side won the vote in Bennington by a two-thirds majority.

Is this an indicator for the libertarian movement? A straw in the wind? A decade ago, in Canada, the Quebec independence movement brought its adherents to the forefront of political debate. Right now, in the Soviet Union, the Lithuanian secessionist movement has brought their adherents to the forefront of political debate. It is page one news every day. So, is Vermont (or California or Texas) secessionism an issue that can bring libertarian thinking to the forefront of the debate here?

—Daniel Rosenthal

Gogh is customarily cited as the kind of artist who could have done better and lived longer, doing more great painting, had society been more supportive. Indeed, "Van Gogh guilt," as I once heard it called, accounts for why Holland, of all countries, is most generous in supporting a far greater percentage of its painters than we or anyone else, not only with annual renewable stipends but with contracts to purchase a certain number of their paintings every year. (Government warehouses are stuffed, to be sure.) What the Dutch fear, I'm told, is having to account for another Van Gogh in their history.

The assumption behind state funding of art is that our beloved economic free market is not reliable in supporting the best art or writing; a similar assumption justifies state support of advanced scientific research. Hess's implicit reply—that the Beatles must be the best contemporary musicians because they are the richest—will not persuade anyone familiar with the whole corpus of current musical activity. (Is Stephen King America's best writer?) No history of any art records the names of those who earned the most money; instead, histories document the achievements of the best, which is to say the elite, whose names have survived another highly competitive process that has little to do with money: They have earned the respect of their peers and of discriminating critics. Hess would make more sense within his assumptions if he recognized what should be the genuine mission of patronage, whether private or public: ensuring that this professional elite does not go the way of Van Gogh. —RK

The high cost of leechcraft — Ten floorstomps for George H. Smith ("Scholarship as Leechcraft," March 1990) for exposing the two-tier structure of libertarian intellectual life, where kept scholars have barely acknowledged advantages in competing with the unkept, and intellectual media depend upon unpaid or underpaid labor from the harem, completely ignoring us street walkers. I tend to know more poet-professors than libertarian profs, but what I've never been able to get either to discuss are the intellectual/psychological costs of (1) receiving most of their income from a single source, which is sometimes a state institution; (2) working in a hierarchical structure in which some have job security (aka tenure) while others do not (and undergo a noticeable personality change when promoted from the latter to the former); (3) having benefits, powers and privileges that are given rather than earned; (4) talking "professionally" mostly to young people who are beholden to you for a grade. Marxist intellectuals seem no more predisposed to address these social-psychological questions than libertarians, both assuring me, like poetry professors, that there are no costs. I



"Enlightenment will come later, my son—first, you have to learn to hunker down."

don't believe them, remembering, as Milton Friedman once said, "There ain't no such thing as a free lunch." —RK

Deutschland über alles?? — German reunification is a *fait accompli*. By all indications, December of this year will see the first nationwide elections in Germany since World War II.

On the plus side, this could mean the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Germany. That would benefit Germans, who would no longer have to feel like a football sitting on the 50 yard line while two teams of grunting ruffians make preparations to begin a very rough, very vicious game. It would also benefit both the American and Russian people, whose governments no longer have that particular pretense for extracting money for the purpose of imperial outreach and world policing. Unfortunately, this possibility looks like it's already drifting into the realm of "Wouldn't it have been nice if . . ."

Though the Soviets initially hung tough with an insistence that NATO troops be removed from West Germany as a prelude to reunification, West German Chancellor Kohl has reiterated the importance of Germany's place in NATO, but made noises about restricting NATO troops to what is now West Germany and allowing Soviet troops to remain in what is now East Germany! Now *there* is a sensible compromise. I'll stop

NATO no longer serves any purpose except to increase tension and drain America's treasury in return for an assurance that any minor conflict in Europe will turn into World War III.

trying to start a fight if you stop trying to start a fight, says Gorbachev; no, says Kohl, it would probably be for the best if everyone continue threatening to start a fight.

NATO was developed as a potential defense against an Eastern Europe and Soviet Union united against Western Europe. The conditions it was created to counter no longer exist. It no longer serves any purpose except to increase tension and drain America's treasury in return for an assurance that any minor conflict in Europe will turn into World War III. Remember how wonderfully the alliance system worked in the first half of the century? No need to change such a great strategy for stability, right?

German monetary union looks like it may come even before official political union, though it might be delayed by the silly notion that the Deutschmark and the Ostmark ought to be fixed at equal value. The right course would be monetary union with conversion at the black (i.e. free) market rate, rather than any politically-established "fair rate." East Germans have a savings rate that would be the envy of those who whine that U.S. citizens don't save as much as they ought to. Of course, the East Germans save so much because the hopelessly inefficient East German economy doesn't produce anything for them to buy. The release of all that concentrated savings on the West German economy at a one-to-one conversion rate would be disastrously inflationary, and senseless.

East Germany will not be nursed to economic health by using any amount of the old medicine that got it so sick in the first place. Every trace of socialist inefficiency should be elimi-

nated, cold. A new national German government should not feel obligated to continue to subsidize failing industry or give out too-generous social welfare payments.

And the environmental health of the whole region will improve with the simple expedient of forcing market pricing constraints on industry. Because its socialist economy was obsessed with quantity of output and ignored input costs, East German industry is enormously wasteful. Its filthy industrial methods have helped to make Eastern Europe the most polluted area in the world. With market discipline, this could begin to change.

Of course, all of these potential benefits depend on the new national German government's being dedicated to peace and freedom. Some with memories of goose-stepping Huns from the first half of the century are worried, perhaps understandably. Kohl's initial reluctance to assure Poland that a reunited Germany would be satisfied with its post-World War II borders fueled the worries of these doubters, but his retreat from this position seemed to allay their fears.

But the potential for positive change is there. Of course it makes no real difference that the land that was once under the control of two governments that called themselves German will now be under the control of one; the real difference will come in the policies of that one government; whether that government will be peaceful, free both politically and economically, and an integral part of the European Community; or whether it will be militaristic, socialistic and nationalistic.

—BD

Oops! — It seemed like a reasonable risk to the revolutionary socialist Sandinista government of Nicaragua. Foreign governments threatened to cut off the flow of money unless it allowed a relatively free election. The Sandinistas controlled a vast army, a vast secret police force, a vast bureaucracy. And they controlled the power of the state to bestow its favors. If they could win the election—and it looked easy, given the power of their state—the flow of aid that guaranteed their power and luxurious lifestyles would continue.

So Sandinista leader Daniel Ortega agreed to an election.

As it gradually became clear to the Sandinistas that the "international monitoring" of the election was for real, and his subjects watched the birth of democracy in Eastern Europe, it dawned on Daniel Ortega that he might be tossed from office. He reacted like an American politician panicked by an unexpectedly tough election: he argued his opponents were in league with the Devil and he promised vast gifts. But promises of houses and free outboard motors couldn't overcome the effects of ten years of military socialist government. Manufactured goods were unavailable; food became a luxury; young men were being forced into the military and sent into battle. In the past year alone, the value of Nicaragua's currency fell from 10¢ to 4/5 of 1¢. After adjusting for inflation, wages stood at half the 1950 level.

And so on February 25, the voters of Nicaragua threw Daniel Ortega out of both office and the luxurious mansion he confiscated during the Revolution.

The reaction of Western leftists to this turn of events has been fascinating. Former Arizona governor Bruce Babbitt, in Nicaragua as a poll watcher, noted the following scene in Managua on election night after it was plain that the

Sandinistas had been defeated in a landslide: "At Sandinista headquarters, the television lights are going out and reporters are leaving, except for the Europeans, who are still hoping for a turnaround." The front page of the San Francisco *Examiner* had a picture of two extremely well-fed suburban matrons on the verge of tears "as they contemplate[d] the Sandinistas' defeat." This contrasted sharply with a picture in the same paper of a street scene in Managua: jubilant Nicaraguans

When it dawned on Daniel Ortega that he might be tossed from office, he reacted like an American politician panicked by an unexpectedly tough election: he argued his opponents were in league with the Devil and he promised vast gifts.

were burning a Sandinista flag.

After his gracious concession speech for American television cameras, Ortega reverted to form—the form of a Latin American military dictator. His police and army—the largest in Latin America, aside from Cuba's—has refused to accept the newly elected government. According to the New York *Times*, his government has "passed out thousands of automatic rifles to its supporters in Managua and other key cities," and has rewritten laws "to transfer large amounts of government property to Sandinista hands."

—RWB

W. W. Bartley, III, RIP — The death of Bill Bartley in February, at age 55, was a great loss to anyone who knew him or his work, or would have come to know them.

Bartley, a fellow at the Hoover Institution, was a libertarian scholar of the first rank. His philosophical contributions, in such books as *The Retreat to Commitment* and *Morality and Religion*, are monuments to reason, and his love of liberty was unsurpassed. His scholarly vitality was stupendous; when he died he was at work as the official biographer of F. A. Hayek and Karl Popper, as well as the general editor of Hayek's *Collected Works*. He demonstrated his intellectual versatility in his *Lewis Carroll's Symbolic Logic*, a product of detective work as well as scholarship. His biographical work dealt with Ludwig Wittgenstein and Werner Erhard.

Bartley was a gentleman—a *gentle* man. I had the pleasure of working with him in a small way at the Institute for Humane Studies and was touched by the warmth that flowed from his sincere interest in what others thought about important matters. I saw him only a few times, but I will fondly remember each one, for they taught me about being a scholar, a libertarian, and a person.

—SLR

Theodore B. Loeffler: RIP — He was one of those people who cared about human liberty and did what he could to advance it. He founded World Research, Incorporated, a non-profit organization that produced educational films and videos to present the ideas of liberty to youth and provided it with funds and direction. (His most famous film was *The Incredible Bread Machine*, familiar to anyone who attended a libertarian political meeting in the 1970s.)

What he did was worth doing. Those who share his love of liberty will miss him.

—RWB

Comment

Make Sense, Not War

by R. W. Bradford

Liberty's editor explains why he is a conscientious objector in the paleo-libertarian war.

Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr's "paleolibertarianism" has stirred up quite a brouhaha (*Liberty*, January-March). According to Rockwell, who invented paleolibertarianism and is thereby able to define it as he pleases, paleolibertarianism is characterized by ten beliefs, six of which he acknowledges all libertarians agree with, plus these four propositions that would "outrage" most libertarian activists:

"The egalitarian ethic [is] morally reprehensible and destructive of private and social authority.

"Social authority—as embodied in the family, church, community, and other intermediating institutions—help[s] protect the individual from the State and [is] necessary for a free and virtuous society.

"Western culture [is] eminently worthy of preservation and defense.

"Objective standards of morality, especially as found in the Judeo-Christian tradition, [are] essential to the free and civilized social order."

Some of the propositions could be interpreted in a way that many libertarians might disagree with them, but I cannot fathom why Rockwell would think most libertarians would be *outraged* by them.

If one considers the "egalitarian ethic" to be "equality before the law," then nearly all libertarians would disagree with Rockwell's first proposition. But if one considers the "egalitarian ethic" to be the notion that equality must be a governmental policy, then all libertarians would agree with Rockwell.

Similarly, if Rockwell's second proposition is taken to mean that social authority as embodied in the father justifies the rape of the daughters, then libertarians would disagree with Rockwell. But if it means that non-

governmental authorities are important, most would likely agree.

If Rockwell's third proposition is taken to mean that all non-Western people are inherently inferior and deserve to be treated as cattle, then libertarians would disagree with Rockwell. But if one means that our own culture is, on balance, a good thing, then nearly all would agree.

Only Rockwell's final proposition would find much disagreement among libertarians. Many libertarians believe that our Judeo-Christian heritage is a mixed blessing—its view of the importance of individual moral choices, for example, is a good thing, but the Inquisition, for example, is a bad thing. Most libertarians—whether they are Christian or not—agree that a free social order can be achieved in a society that is not based on Judeo-Christian morality. But while many libertarians would disagree with this proposition, few would be outraged.

Not one of these propositions "outrages" libertarians. That is not to say that Rockwell hasn't outraged an awful lot of libertarians. His denunciation of unnamed libertarians for "smearing the most glorious political idea in human history with libertine muck," his calls to "delouse" the movement, to "cleanse" the movement, his characterization of many libertarians as "repugnant," his characterization of the Libertarian party as "diabolic" all lead to the inevitable conclusion that Rockwell is deliberately trying to stir up a fight, despite the lack of an ideological basis for disagreement.

Rockwell apparently wants a brawl, and is determined to get into one. How else can one explain the following passage:

"Even non-paleolibertarians . . . ought to welcome . . . libertarians who are cultural and moral tradition-

alists. But my guess is that they will not, and that we will have a nasty fight on our hands. I, for one, welcome that fight."

So Rockwell "guesses" that non-paleolibertarians would not welcome traditionalists into the movement. His guess is wrong, of course, as anyone who has attended any libertarian gathering in recent years can testify, so there will be no "nasty fight," no matter how much Rockwell "welcomes" one.

Why Rockwell wants a "nasty fight" I do not know, but I hope that libertarians will not be incensed by Rockwell's incendiary prose into the "nasty fight" that Rockwell relishes. Disagreement and debate over strategy, over political theory, over tactics . . . these are healthy for any movement. But insulting those with whom one disagrees can lead only to self-destructive ideological fratricide. As Ron Paul wrote about the controversy, "The debate [is] more divisive than productive. I prefer to use my energy attacking those who support statism."

Murray Rothbard has observed that "freedom is for everyone," including "hippies, *lüftmenschen*, and special interest minority groups" as well as "Christians" and "the average middle-class American." The libertarian civil war that Rockwell looks forward to serves neither the cause of liberty nor civility. It is one war in which I shall surely remain a conscientious objector.

Early in his essay, Rockwell observed that "So divisive has [the situation become] that good conservatives and good libertarians have forgotten how to talk to each other." Let us hope that Rockwell's pugilistic prose and his desire for a "nasty fight" will not bring those who love liberty to the point where good traditionalist libertarians and good radical libertarians can no longer talk to each other.

Perspective

Naught's Had, All's Spent Conservatism In Its Latter Days

by William P. Moulton

Double, double toil and trouble; fire burn and cauldron bubble . . . Though the cauldron of the conservative movement may sometimes *seem* to offer good medicine for freedom-lovers, Moulton suspects that it is about to evaporate in the heat of its political success.

When George Nash's pathbreaking book *The Conservative Intellectual Movement In America Since 1945* appeared in 1976, the movement that it chronicled seemed to have reached a mature and settled stage in its development. After four decades or more of erratically ebbing and flowing with

precious little in the way of positive accomplishment, conservatism in this country had collectively calmed down, rolled up its sleeves and faced the long and daunting task of a slow, incremental cultivation of influence and power within the Republican Party and other political institutions, and eventually in the media and the academy. This, at least, was the consensus of political observers at the three-quarter mark of the century, although it was realized that not all conservative activists were satisfied with such a prognosis.

To be sure, even by the time of the Ford presidency there were some signs of conservative ascendancy, though not of a spectacular nature. At least the Reaganite wing of the GOP could give the dominant Nixon-Ford centrists a strong electoral challenge. The media and the groves of academe were proving to be much harder to crack, although the all but monolithic left-liberalism that had long prevailed in these fields was showing signs of losing its grip.

At the minimum, both supporters and foes agreed that American conservatism had come of age and was likely to remain in the political arena. What neither Nash nor any other serious observer of the right-wing scene foresaw

was the enormous waxing of the conservative cause during the succeeding decade. In that brief period of time, the movement had found a presidential champion and twice elected him to the presidency, then followed up with the elevation of his second-in-command to the succession. Conservatism made advances in the intellectual and academic world that would have seemed wildly improbable a few years earlier. In short, American conservatism, which in the Goldwater days had seemed the Church Militant, had been transformed into the Church Triumphant. With Ronald Reagan standing athwart the national political scene like a colossus and preparing to hand on a vigorous legacy to his successor, the demi-paradise, the almost-Eden of which Barry's Boys (and Girls) had dreamed had seemingly come to pass.

Yet . . . yet. In this era of triumph the conservative *movement*, as distinguished from merely the views and programs of political figures who are more or less identified as conservatives, was neither as healthy nor as coherent as might superficially seem to be the case.

When our desire is got without content

R. W. Bradford refers, in the January issue of this magazine, to the crisis within the conservative movement that has been engendered by the breakup of communism, a process which, of course, has passed several more milestones since he wrote. I believe it is more useful to regard the conservative problem *vis-a-vis* communism as merely one aspect of a much broader phenomenon. Conservatism in the American sense is, I believe, not simply in crisis but in a state of incipient decay; it is at or nearing the end of the era of its historic cohesiveness and usefulness. This end will signal not only a loss of self-identity and confidence, but a declining level of influence, both intellectual and political, and may eventually lead the movement into the kind of marginality that one ascribes to, say, Jacobites and Baconians.

Of course, to many it will seem quixotic to write about the decline or even collapse of conservatism in the era of Reagan-Bush, to say nothing of Margaret Thatcher. As the first step toward justifying this thesis, I must

present a definition of "conservatism" as it is used here. I am referring, for the purposes of this survey, to people who self-consciously share the conservative frame of reference, who specifically think of themselves as conservatives, and whose values, despite individual differences, are rooted in that matrix of views that extends from Edmund Burke to current thinkers such as Russell Kirk and Michael Oakeshott, to name but two outstanding representatives. In their minimalist form, these

Conservatism in the American sense is not simply in crisis but in a state of incipient decay; it is at or nearing the end of the era of its historic cohesiveness and usefulness.

views include belief in traditional patterns of society, and distrust of social change and postulated rights based on mere abstract theory; an acceptance of human differentiation and a concomitant rejection of coercive egalitarianism; belief in the state as only one civil institution among others, with an emphatic denial of the notion that it is the fountainhead of all virtue; belief in religion or at least in the necessity of a public order based on religious values; a sense of social stability and civility that sees the past as an anchor against the threatening chaos of change, rather than a dead weight to be jettisoned for the building of a future order; skepticism regarding broad schemes for the improvement of society, especially those with a strong utopian bent; and, generally, commitment to private property and to some degree of personal autonomy, though not always to modern capitalism.

Not all movements in the direction of freedom, even in the economic sphere, are "conservative." Many social trends that are vaguely identified as right-wing by the media have no real relationship to, and certainly were not spawned by, the actual conservative movement. For example, interest in hard-money investment strategies and in offshore opportunities for tax

avoidance and financial privacy began rapidly to increase during the inflation of the Carter years. Certainly many persons of conservative outlook were sympathetic to these developments, but the intellectuals of the movement paid little heed and were often scornful, either denouncing the increasing materialism of the age (Russell Kirk, George F. Will) or broadly hinting that such strategies were unpatriotic (Richard Viguerie, Medford Evans). Similarly, deregulation began as a series of proposals from pragmatic centrists and consumerists within the Carter administration, and only gradually and belatedly won the general, though not complete, backing of conservative activists. (Barry Goldwater was arguing against airline deregulation as late as his last Senate term in the mid-'80s, while the bellwether right-wing weekly *Human Events* is still featuring articles opposing the freeing up of the broadcast industry).

Conservatism, then, as many of its leading apologists are quick to admit, is not the same thing as the movement toward a greater appreciation of the free market, despite some obvious overlapping of interests and beliefs.

Was it Not Yesterday We Spoke Together?

When we come to the matter of evaluating the relationship between liberty on the one hand and what remains of an identifiable conservative movement on the other, we must pay respect to a historical context. There is a natural temptation, especially acute if one slips into intellectual laziness, to make identifications of both friends and opponents on the basis of superficial and media-induced judgments. For example, in 1948 Robert Taft was generally considered to represent the far right edge of the political spectrum. A few years later this description was applied to Joseph McCarthy. Advance another decade and the prime candidate for such a position was Barry Goldwater; a few more years, and it was George Wallace. Now it is obvious that only a very frivolous political conception would assign these four men, with their widely conflicting outlooks, to a common position as members of some ill-defined, or more likely undefined, "right wing."

In the Kennedy-Goldwater era—if I may be permitted to create a new historical epoch—people regarded as strong conservatives routinely attacked the New Deal, the welfare state, and the FDR legacy in general. Although they had learned, in most cases, a certain caution with regard to Social Security, they roundly condemned most other transfer payments, at all levels of government. Massive federal projects such as TVA, the farm subsidy program, and what was then the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) were routinely brought up as candidates for abolition or privatization. Federal intervention in education and medicine was anathema. This was true not only among intellectuals who didn't have to face the voters, but among elected officials.

What sort of views are *now* regarded as representing the "extreme right"? In the interest of brevity, I will present just one. Vin Weber, a five-term Congressman from Minnesota, is invariably referred to in the media as an ultraconservative, a member of the hard-core right. In the media perception, at least, he occupies the same type of niche as did Bruce Alger, August Johansen or H. R. Gross in the Congress of the Kennedy-Goldwater era. What are his actual views? A recent *Wall Street Journal* profile of Weber mentions that he repeatedly speaks in positive terms of "activist government." In a recent interview he stated, "Voters are not debating whether or not the federal government ought to be involved in education or whether the government should be involved in helping poor people. Some Republicans may want to sit around and argue about that, but that argument has been decided. What we have to do is get beyond that and craft Republican solutions to those problems."

Yet Do I Fear Thy Nature

The more deeply one penetrates the heart of serious conservative thought (of which the quarterly journal *Modern Age* represents, in this country, the cutting edge and the highest level of scholarship), the more depressing does the journey become. Along this ideological route we are treated, *inter alia*, to a pervasive denigration of the

Enlightenment and its ideals, as well as of the classical liberalism to which it helped give birth. We also witness intellectual assaults on reason, the scientific method, and individual rights. These attacks are not absolute, but they are enough to give one pause when postulating a link between these authors and the cause of liberty.

Modern Age illustrates the kind of widespread conservative opinions and value judgments with which classical liberals such as this writer have problems. Although many statements are made with which libertarians and their allies are in complete agreement, we are subjected to continuous jeremiads against humanism and secularism and told that the idea of progress is possible only within the context of Christianity. We learn from the essayist Edward R. McLean that "[T]he advocates of . . . individualism seek to create conditions which inevitably produce the opposite of what they advocate" and that "[T]he place of the individual . . . is incomplete without the Incarnation." Anne Husted Burleigh

The more deeply one penetrates the heart of serious conservative thought, the more depressing does the journey become. Along this ideological route we witness intellectual assaults on the Enlightenment, classical liberalism, reason, the scientific method, and individual rights.

warns us not to "succumb to the libertarian, individualist conception of society." We are told further, by Marion Montgomery of the University of Georgia, that the great Ralph Waldo Emerson should be dismissed as merely an anti-Christian subversive. In the field of epistemology, we encounter Frederick Wilhelmsen's dictum that "reason divorced from faith is pedantry enthroned" and many similar statements.

In the area of civil liberties, the student of intellectual conservatism is told by Jesuit Father James Y. Scholl that

"The rapid legalization of what were called in classical natural law 'vices' had made it more and more imperative that political theory retain its principled foothold in theology." We are given a reminder from the late Willmoore Kendall of Yale that "We do not make sense as a community so long as we tolerate Communists and pro-Communists in our midst" and that "[T]he surest way for [society] to lose its meaning is for it to tell itself, and its potential dissidents, that where dissidence is concerned, the sky's the limit."

Publisher Henry Regnery warns that *Playboy* magazine and the "Playboy philosophy" are threats to the American way of life. Peter Lawler of Berry College in Georgia explains that America and freedom are both Biblical in nature. There is more, of course, but we do not need an exhaustive catalog. We have, I think, made the point that the conservative intellectual movement in America has very little relation even to those modest successes that have been achieved by free-market advocates in the academy and in the field of policy.

We Sit in Judgment Here

There have been two conservatisms, in the specific modern ideological sense, in this country. The first began about 1934 as a reaction against the New Deal. This movement had a strong classical liberal character but also possessed elements of mild xenophobia and Anglophobia, a touch of anti-intellectualism or at least distrust of East Coast academics, and a type of conservative populism that extolled the virtues of rural and small-town folk, especially those of the midwest. Its geographic stronghold tended to be the aforementioned area, and its ranks were heavily Protestant. Its leading political representative was undoubtedly Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio.

This conservatism, with both its good and its bad points, was like a stream that flowed along between rather narrow banks, in a single direction, gradually gaining strength and waxing into a powerful river, never overwhelming the forces holding it to its course but never changing its flow either. To continue the conceit, we may say that at a certain time this river

rolled out onto a vast alluvial plain and became something altogether different. It now covered a great area but had little depth. Seen at a casual glance, it appeared mightier than ever, but a closer look would reveal that it was no longer

Catholics altered conservatism in several ways. The mass base who came to right-wing voting ranks included a huge bloc of people who were less attached to the old Jeffersonian liberalism than other Americans, and whose opposition to communism was more likely to be a function of the latter's atheism than part of a general abhorrence of tyranny.

in forward motion. Then again, as time went on, the alluvial plain became a porous sponge, and the river was sucked in, becoming only a sea of muck, losing all identity.

The "certain time" mentioned above was the arrival of the Eisenhower administration. Taft Republicanism could not cope, as a coherent force, with the success of the Republican Party during the 1950s.

This decade was, in fact, conservatism's Dark Days. True, a new movement of the right was being born, but in its nascent phase no one could predict what success, if any, it would enjoy. The miniscule rivulet set in flow by the launching of William F. Buckley's *National Review* in 1955 survived, but the stream into which it coalesced was quite different from the conservatism of Taft.

This second conservatism was much more oriented toward foreign affairs, willing to give up a fair amount of domestic freedom in order to combat godless communism. The quasi-isolationism of the earlier right was abandoned with scarcely a thought given to its demise. Elements entered that were new, both demographically and ideologically. The influx of McCarthyites ensured the continued

existence of a modicum of paranoia and intolerance within the new conservatism. The entry into the ranks of large numbers of Catholics was fostered to some degree by the McCarthy phenomenon and more by the general anti-communism of the Cold War era, the fact that many members of this faith came from or had roots in nations that were now under Soviet domination, and the turn to the left, gradual and muddled though this process was, of large portions of the Democratic Party. Catholics altered conservatism in several ways. The mass base who came to right-wing voting ranks included a huge bloc of people who were usually less attached to the old Jeffersonian liberalism than other Americans, and whose opposition to communism was more likely to be a function of the latter's atheism than part of a general abhorrence of tyranny (which was, for example, definitely the case with most of Taft's followers). The Catholic intellectuals who entered the conservative legions around this time were, for the most part, both more profound and more European-oriented thinkers than the best minds of the earlier movement. They opened up to the American right much Continental conservative thought, in addition to the richness of the whole Thomist tradition. But their appreciation of the Anglo-Saxon roots of individual rights theory was sometimes weak, and some of their scholarly concerns—e.g. a fascination with the alleged evil legacy of gnosticism and the attempt to link the modern left with certain medieval heresies—seem obscurantist and quirky. At any event, the Roman Catholic influx put a new spin on American conservatism, one that at least marginally speeded up the erosion of its quasi-libertarian heritage.

A second infusion of new blood took place after 1970 as a by-product of the meteoric national career of George Wallace. The little Alabama governor was not really a conservative, but a populist with some right-wing themes. Nevertheless, his third-party run for the presidency in 1968 and his try for the Democratic nomination four years later did bring into the political process many people of a more or less conservative bent. As Wallace's career waned following his crippling by a would-be assassin in May 1972, many of his more right-wing followers became active in some conservative causes. The so-called New Right (of which more below) benefitted especially from the energy and support of the newcomers. This was not, to put it mildly, an influx of political philosophers, but of masses of Americans who felt vaguely threatened by the policies and values of establishment institutions. There was a certain amount conservative resistance to their arrival on the stage of political activism, and their influence on the right should not be exaggerated. However, they did serve notice to the nation's leaders that certain values—patriotism, religion, resentment at social engineering, with many particular derivatives of each—were about to become partisan political issues.

By the time the conservative movement was able to nominate Ronald Reagan for the presidency in 1980, it had become a federation of diverse constituencies and value systems. These elements—Old Right, New Right, evangelicals, neoconservatives, quasi-libertarian—were held together in a sort of colloidal suspension by the personality and leadership of Reagan himself, as well as by perceived mutual benefits to be derived from getting him

elected. With his landslide victory that year, however, the various centrifugal forces began to reassert themselves. There was a recreation of at least a semblance of unity for the president's reelection in 1984, but by that time the old pattern of the Taft

Republicans was rearing its head. The scale was much larger, since conservatism had grown greatly in numbers and power since the days of Eisenhower. As before, however, factional-

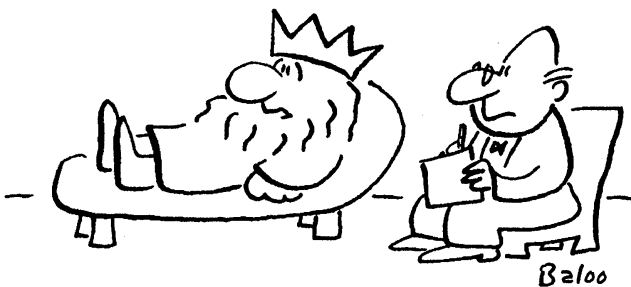
The neocons were an easily identifiable group—intellectuals of the Washington - New York-Boston axis, veterans not only of contemporary liberalism but, in the case of the older generation, of the Stalinist/social democrat wars of the thirties and forties.

ism, ambition for office and appointments, the ascendancy of non-ideological political functionaries, the over-centering of attention and energy on the person and functions of the president, all contributed to a loss of direction, purpose and self-confidence among conservatives, at least *qua* conservatives. To return briefly to my metaphor, the vast alluvial plain of Reaganite success soaked up the vital energies of the movement.

Attend These Men Our Pleasure?

Our focus on conservatism's relation to the long-term prospects for liberty naturally tends to narrow our gaze to those constituent elements that have some cohesiveness and staying power. Usually, this means they also possess at least a modicum of intellectual content. We needn't bother with the Birchers or the *Spotlight* people (the latter emphatically reject the conservative label anyway), and we certainly need not concern ourselves with marginal racist and anti-Semitic groups.

However, there are a few varieties of conservatism that not only have a significant identity but which are characterized by such vitality and self-confidence that many observers would claim that they are exempt from the trends which I have just presented. In fact, the leaders and admirers of each of these groups tend to maintain that while other forms of conservatism are in decline, or never amounted to much



"I have libertarian impulses."

in the first place, their movement (the true conservatism) is doing fine and is ready and willing to face the challenges of the next century.

I doubt these claims, but three of these conservatisms nevertheless deserve attention.

Hours Dreadful and Things Strange— The Neoconservatives

By far the most intellectually significant is neoconservatism. The neoconservatives are also the most likely to be well-known to, and taken seriously by, the educated reader. But the "neocons" are also the most transitory and the least likely to shore up the settling conservative edifice. To explain this seeming anomaly we must briefly look into the origins of this movement.

Neoconservatism is a product of events that occurred within liberalism and the left, not within conservatism. To the slim ranks of committed right-wing intellectuals during the late sixties and early seventies it may have seemed that the left was a monolithic and omnipresent force. In fact, the dominant New Deal liberalism was in great stress. It was inevitable that some sort of backlash would occur as the long-triumphant old Roosevelt coalition gradually came apart at the seams as a consequence of the radicalization of a large minority of its members under the influence of the the black power revolution and the anti-Vietnam War movement. There were, after all, plenty of articulate liberals in the Truman mold, patriotic, anti-communist and pro-American, though mildly left wing (along labor union lines) on domestic issues. Such trends as minority-group pandering, radical feminism, reflexive anti-Americanism, racial quotas, and the rewriting of the history of the Cold War in a pro-Soviet direction left these gestating neoconservatives cold.

The neocons were an easily identifiable group—intellectuals of the Washington - New York - Boston axis, veterans not only of contemporary liberalism but, in the case of the older generation, of the Stalinist/social democrat wars of the thirties and forties (battles that were critically important at the time on the campuses of the City University of New York and of

Columbia, but scarcely noticed west of the Hudson). The great majority were Jewish, and nearly all had written for or would write for *Commentary* magazine. The real signal that neoconservatism had arrived as a coherent movement occurred with the publication of the December 1970 issue of that journal. This number was devoted to a series of attacks on the "counterculture" and on the values of the nascent McGovern wing of the Democratic Party. It was here that neoconservatism began to assume a real identity.

One problem facing the neoconservatives has been the simple fact that there aren't very many of them.

The leading lights are easily enumerated. Irving Kristol who, typically, graduated from CCNY in 1940 as a member of the Young People's Socialist League, is unquestionably the intellectual leader, not only because of his voluminous writings but because he is the most explicit of major neocons about his move to the right. Unlike some of his compatriots, Kristol doesn't shun the neoconservative label, and has been frequently quoted as saying "The more I think about the term, the more I like it."

Matriculating at City University with Kristol a half-century ago were other future neocons, including Seymour Martin Lipset, Daniel Bell, Melvin Lasky, and Nathan Glazer. Slightly younger luminaries include Norman Podhoretz, editor of *Commentary* during the period when it began to move cautiously to the right, and his wife Midge Decter, widely known for her penetrating and scholarly refutations of the more questionable aspects of contemporary feminism. The sociologists Edward Banfield and James Q. Wilson and the military and geopolitical historian Edward Luttwak pretty much round out the list of really well-known neocons.

Much of the analysis of the neocons by those outside their ranks is decidedly polemical. Attacks from the left range from the relatively mild statement by Peter Steinfels that the movement, "should it prevail, threatens to attenuate and diminish the promise of American democracy," to the hysterical and paranoid denunciations that routinely emanate from such sources

as *The Nation*, *In These Times*, and the even more hard-core Marxist press. Such passion often makes it difficult for all but the most inveterate political addicts to understand the complex relationship between neoconservatism and the older right-wing movement. Although this nexus may at times seem to consist of little but mutual acrimony, some deeper evaluation is

The New Right began as a right-populist reaction to a perceived betrayal of conservative principles by the Republican Party. In a sense, the New Right is a mirror image of the neoconservatives. The neocons arose out of ferment on the left, the New Right out of ferment on the right.

needed to arrive at a reasoned prognosis of the entire conservative trend in America's political and intellectual life.

Neoconservative beliefs can be pinned down in only rather general terms. As Steinfels has stated, it is difficult to present the formal views of "... a movement that is reluctant to identify itself ... We have no Neoconservative Manifesto ... no statements issued from the National Association of Neoconservatives. All generalizations risk an injustice to this or that writer." Fair enough, but we can still come up with some identifying characteristics; after all, one leading neocon, Irving Kristol, has not been reticent about describing what he regards as standard or proper neoconservative thought. In his opus *Two Cheers for Capitalism* he sets forth five cardinal principles. First, "neoconservatism is not at all hostile to the idea of the welfare state, but it is critical of the Great Society version of this welfare state. In general, it approves of those social reforms that, while providing needed security and comfort to the individual ... do so with a minimum of bureaucratic intrusion."

Second, Kristol says that neocons, while generally supporting the market economy as an instrument for efficiently allocating resources, are "willing to interfere with the market for overriding social purposes [but] prefer to do so by rigging the market . . . rather than by direct bureaucratic controls."

Third, Kristol and his *compadres* are "respectful of traditional values and institutions: religion, the family, the 'high culture' of Western civilization. If there is any one thing that neoconservatives are unanimous about, it is their dislike of the 'counterculture' that has played so remarkable a role in American life [in recent] years."

Fourth, the neocons uphold the ideal of equality of opportunity, but reject the coercive egalitarianism that attempts to ensure that "everyone ends up with equal shares of everything."

Fifth, according to Kristol, "neoconservatives are critical of the post-Vietnam isolationism now so popular in Congress, and many are suspicious of 'detente' as well."

Allowing for a few tiny changes in emphasis and terminology—Kristol was writing in 1978 and few think in terms of "detente" anymore—this is a reasonable summary of the neoconservative position. I would only add two widely shared viewpoints to the above

list. In domestic policy, the neocons generally see themselves as being in more or less conscious rebellion against what they designate as the New Class—what neoconservative convert Michael Novak characterizes as "the knowledge industry: federal and local government workers, researchers, lawyers, planners, consultants, educators, information systems operatives, journalists, social workers and others, [most of whom] depend for their livelihood on expanding and activist government expenditure. . . . Most are Democrats." This New Class (which even neocons admit is impossible of precise definition, but is still felt to be a useful analytic concept) is further seen as representing an "adversarial culture" in opposition to the values of the majority of Americans, who are said to believe, in Novak's words, in "the traditional values of honesty, decency, hard work, competitive advancement, religious faith, compassion for the suffering and social cooperation."

In foreign policy, neoconservatives usually adhere to the broad view that the democratic capitalist system is morally, politically and economically superior to all other types of social organization, ranging from traditional despotism through democratic socialism to fascism and communism, and that this system should be strongly en-

couraged throughout the world, even to the point of adopting a pattern of selective foreign intervention on the part of the Western powers. As a narrower aspect of this doctrine, the notion popularized by former U. N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick, namely that there exists a vast qualitative gulf between totalitarian regimes, which are said to be incapable of internal reform or dissolution, and merely authoritarian systems, which are susceptible to external and internal pressures, is held by most neocons, or at least was until very recent events in the Soviet bloc.

Now, it should be obvious that all the above ideas are both the source of the neocons' success and acceptability, and the harbinger of the ultimate irrelevance of their movement. For these views are now simply the outlook of most opinion makers and of a large portion of the thinking public. They are well on their way to becoming mere commonplaces.

Of course, one possible reaction to this development would be simply to say that neoconservatism has triumphed in the intellectual world, that it has, by dint of its crystalline logic and scholarly acumen, taken command of the field of battle.

But a mere glance at the nation's media establishment and at its major academic and publishing institutions is enough to indicate that this is not the case. The influence that the neos do exercise is a factor, not of any ideological *coup* on their part, but rather of their closeness to the intellectual mainstream. It is astonishing how little the major neocons have ever departed from sociological and political respectability. When the U. S. was in a vaguely social activist/reformist mood in the Kennedy and early Johnson years, Kristol, Podhoretz *et al.* were right there with the masses. The neocons' disillusionment with the dopier Great Society programs just kept pace with that of Joe Sixpack. When most Americans began to believe that the black civil rights movement had passed from the securing of justice to the cultivating of unearned special privileges, the neoconservatives were on hand to tell them that, yes, they were correct to feel this way. The same has been true with the feminist move-

1989 alcohol consumption continued decade-long decline...

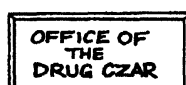
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ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION
DECREASED IN 1989 FOR
THE 10TH STRAIGHT YEAR!



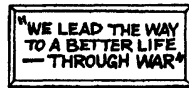
WE SHOULD HAVE
STARTED A WAR
ON ALCOHOL
10 YEARS AGO.



BUT ALCOHOL USE HAS
DECLINED FOR A DECADE
WITHOUT AN ALCOHOL WAR.



EXACTLY. SO NOW
THERE'S NO WAY WE
CAN CLAIM CREDIT.



ment—breaking down archaic legal barriers and demanding equal pay for equal work were OK, while shrill man-hating rhetoric and “comparable worth” were not. Similar things could be said of environmentalism, of the defense buildup of the Reagan years, and of the Cold War.

I am not implying that the neoconservatives were necessarily wrong on all or any of these issues, and I am certainly not suggesting that there is any element of conspiracy in this pattern. The point is merely that the neocons

Except in the United States, Christian observance is in decline throughout the Western world, and even here it is holding its own, no more.

have not presented a radical critique of any widely accepted political program. They have scarcely been on the cutting edge of new ideas even within the context of the values that they uphold. They know the value of caution and of “conservatism” in a very non-ideological sense when it comes to asking for grants and securing academic tenure and promotion. In fact, they know it too well, for while this ultra-respectable approach works in terms of immediate objectives, it also guarantees a narrowed intellectual vision and a stultified final product. Neocons and their think tanks are great at churning out papers on increasing governmental efficiency, but abysmal at thinking about alternatives to government, except in those few areas—e.g. trash pickup or wetlands preservation—where such alternatives are already at least moderately respectable in establishment circles. The same is true in foreign affairs. Go to a neocon if you want good studies on the geopolitical implications of superpower proxy struggles in Central America. If you want an analysis of the historical and political case for *non-intervention* in that region, you'll have to look elsewhere.

This conventionality will continue

to diminish the self-identity and importance of the neoconservative movement. The crumbling of the communist enemy will also contribute. It is difficult, for example, to predict a rosy future for the Committee on the Present Danger, the archetypal neocon foreign policy institution. Many individuals with neocon background will certainly continue to have successful careers, but probably not in a manner that will be closely related to the viability of conservatism. By the beginning of the next century, it is not unlikely that the neo-conservative label will be as dated as the epithet “dixiecrat.”

That Which Would Be Feared—The New Right

The second subset within American conservatism that is claimed by some analysts to be strong enough to lead the movement into a new future is the New Right. This term began to be used in 1974 and 1975 to describe some of the right-wing opposition to President Ford after his selection of Nelson Rockefeller as his interim vice-president. Essentially, the New Right began as a right-populist reaction to a perceived betrayal of conservative principles by the Republican Party. In a sense this movement is a mirror image of the neoconservatives. The neocons arose out of ferment on the left, the New Right out of ferment on the right.

During its rather brief history the movement has remained centered around a small number of leaders: Richard Viguerie, former YAF leader and now direct-mail entrepreneur; Howard Phillips, former Republican National Committee official and later founder of the Conservative Caucus;

Paul Weyrich, who operates through his Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress; and, until his untimely death from AIDS, Terry Dolan, who pioneered the use of political action committees (PACs) by conservatives.

We are, again, concerned here more with ideas and programs than with personalities. However, this may not be the best approach when examining the New Right. Though by no means totally inarticulate, the New Right is characterized more by style and emotional flair than by deep political and philosophical thought. Its style is resentful populism. This movement opposes most of the same forces as do the main-line conservatives, but adds to its enemies' list those institutions that might loosely be termed the “Establishment”—bankers, big business, publishers, the academy, most prominent East Coast figures.

Unlike the broader conservative movement, the New Right has only a rather loose loyalty to the G.O.P. New Right leaders have supported (and later rejected) a number of politicians from both parties: Richard Nixon, John Connally, George Wallace, Lester Maddox, Ronald Reagan, to name the most prominent. This frequent disillusionment with political figures is probably a product of the New Right tendency to demand and expect quick, dramatic results from those whom it lionizes—a sure formula for letdown in the American political context.

Like the neocons, the New Right activists have nurturing institutions. Those of the latter tendency, however, are rather feeble compared with the impressive think tanks of the Kristol-Podhoretz apparatus. The New Right isn't really comfortable with such intellectual appurtenances. Its specialty is

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general-purpose mass-membership organizations. Prominent examples are, or have been, in addition to those mentioned above, the Moral Majority of Jerry Falwell, the National Conservative Political Action Committee, and the Eagle Forum of anti-feminist crusader Phyllis Schlafly. There are also, of course, a number of single-issue groups and *ad hoc* committees but, except perhaps for those relating to the abortion issue, their role in

the granting of special privileges), abortion, easy divorce, sex education, secular humanism (also ill-defined), permissiveness, pornography, the Panama Canal Treaty, sanctions against South Africa and, for the most part, negotiations of any kind with the Soviet Union; on the positive side, advocacy of parental control of education (including textbook selection), governmental aid to "preserve the family" (not all contributors were agreed on this), restriction or elimination of trade with communist nations, aid to anti-Soviet movements in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola and Mozambique, and, naturally, various proposals to reverse the negative trends cited above.

All this is fairly predictable, and is set forth with the usual lack of depth that typifies New Right polemics. Deeper issues bring forth disturbing analyses. Several of the essays in *The New Right Papers* were highly critical of the concept of a free society and railed against capitalism and socialism—"both reflexes of the same degraded, aluminum coin" in the words of one author—with equal vehemence. The enemy was not the omnipotent state, which many of the contributors accept so long as it remains in conservative hands, but the soulless spirit of international commerce and finance. One essayist called explicitly for a new mercantilism that would help relegate business considerations to a mere function of American national(istic) policy.

More could be written about the New Right, especially with regard to its recent campaign for what its leaders call "cultural conservatism," a program which, if it were to become the dominant motif of the New Right, would almost entirely sever that movement from the anti-statist, classical liberal aspects of mainline conservatism. Enough, however, has been presented to demonstrate the irrelevance of the New Right to intellectual conservatism. The New Right represents advocacy devoid of thought, serious analysis, or a sense of perspective. In short, it lacks as a movement the Aristotelian virtue of prudence, in all of that virtue's contexts and manifestations. In the field of political activism, Viguerie, Phillips and their cohorts are in a stronger position, but here they possess no ideologi-

cal coherence to go with their numbers, and their relationship to conservatism, and to conservatism's future, is weak and problematical. For all of its bluster and occasional influence on public policy, the New Right is at bottom little more than a frenetic hodgepodge of mailing lists, half-baked impulses, and overblown rhetoric.

Was the Hope Drunk Wherein You Dressed Yourself?—The Paleoconservatives

The third and final conservative satrapy that we must consider is paleoconservatism. This is the most important to our purpose because, alone among conservative factions, this one is viewed by some prominent libertarians as providing excellent potential for recruitment, or even for full-fledged alliance. Certainly the group warrants scrutiny.

But is not clear whether there is an actual "group" to be scrutinized. The term "paleoconservative" began to turn up occasionally a decade ago, when serious critiques of the neoconservatives began to appear in right-wing publications. At that time it (paleo-) was often used as a synonym for "Old Right." Both designations were *sometimes* used to refer to pre-*National Review* Taft Republicans, but far more often they just referred to any conservative who wasn't a neocon. In truth, that is all that "paleocon" means today in the usage of many writers. Obviously, libertarians who call for an alliance with these people have something more precise in mind. The question is, can the word be attached to a usable concept?

The notion of an identifiable paleoconservative movement was popularized by Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming as recently as 1988 in their book *The Conservative Movement*. The authors definitely consider themselves paleos, and their volume can be seen as a reasonably civil and scholarly attack on neoconservative influence on right-wing thinking and institutions. Whether they really clear up the matter of definition is open to dispute. Gottfried and Fleming do not so much define paleoconservatism as contrast its approaches and views with those of the neocons. "The paleo-conservatives drew their insights and convictions from a humanistic and religious

Is there any substance to the paleoconservatives? Certainly a general dislike of Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz isn't much on which to build.

gaining money and recruits to New Right causes seems to be minimal.

Leading New Right figures eschew political philosophy and generally avoid discussion of fundamental principles. Certainly there are some people of scholarly bent associated with the movement, but they tend to restrict their activities to those related to political policy. The deeper aspects of their thinking are usually not engaged. This does not mean that New Right leaders are dull (although when it comes to followers they probably do attract a generally lower intellectual and educational stratum than does either neoconservatism or the old-line right). Rather, the cultural and rhetorical style of the New Right is populist, in a way that transcends political stances. Its approach is emotional, evangelical, an appeal to deeply ingrained but often unarticulated values.

When the New Right does attempt to formalize its positions, the results are less than edifying. The principal production of this sort, to date, has been *The New Right Papers* (1982), edited by Robert W. Whitaker. This is a weak mishmash, but it does serve to illustrate all the major New Right themes: opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, homosexual rights (ill-defined: the New Right makes no distinction between decriminalization and

heritage [and] their hearts remained in literature and theology. The neoconservatives, by contrast, revel in statistics and computerized information." Further, "What paleoconservatives often attribute to human frailty, or to the failure to deal adequately with that condition, neoconservatives treat as problems for which there exist right and wrong solutions. . . . [T]heir position is not entirely incompatible with modern state planning." Whereas paleos, as these writers define them, look for alternatives to the welfare state, "the neoconservatives' belief in the welfare state is both a permanent aspect of their ideology and a characteristic that distinguishes them from the older Right." In foreign affairs, "Neoconservatives also distinguish themselves from older American conservatives by their vision of a global democratic order." The former view

this world with a "neo-Wilsonian focus." And so on.

It is obvious that the passages cited above have one common theme: they say more about neo- than about paleoconservatism. That is part of the problem. Is there any substance to the paleos? Certainly a general dislike of Irving Kristol and Norman Podhoretz isn't much on which to build.

A few very important libertarian figures are quite enthusiastic about the paleos. In November 1989, a number of libs and paleos met in Rockford, Illinois at the headquarters of the Rockford Institute, which Murray N. Rothbard refers to as "the central institution of the paleos." Thomas Fleming (who edits the Institute's monthly journal *Chronicles*) was present, as was his co-author, Paul Gottfried; M. E. Bradford, noted as an anti-Lincoln scholar and leading Southern agrarian,

was with the paleo contingent, as was Joseph Sobran, the acerbic columnist and *National Review* editor. Libertarians included Rothbard, Llewellyn H. Rockwell Jr., and David Gordon. These were the well-known names; a few others from each side also showed up.

According to Rothbard and Rockwell (each of whom has since given his own account in print) the meeting was a virtual love feast, with an unexpected amount of agreement on basic issues such as victimless crimes, the drug war, and non-interventionism. The only significant argument, it would seem, came over the matter of immigration policy, with the paleos adhering to the need to use restrictions on entry as a way of preserving our national culture and holding down the ballooning of the welfare state. A surprising area of consensus

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involved the role of religion. This was apparently an instance where the libertarians had already melded into the mindset of the paleos, rather than a case of the paleos coming around to the lib position. According to Rothbard, all participants were in agreement that a "Christian culture" is a necessary precondition for liberty in this country, and that the major obstacle to paleo cooperation with libertarians is that the former thinks of the latter (correctly, in MNR's view) as largely a collection of hippies, hedonists, and atheists.

If Rothbard, Rockwell *et al.* are real-

The future of freedom lies in the direction of increasing tolerance, not in that of conformism and the purging of deviants.

ly in the process of forging a successful pro-liberty coalition, who can begrudge them? However, before we all begin dancing in the streets, a few small doubts and caveats are in order. For one thing, it should not escape notice that in *The Conservative Movement* Gottfried and Fleming maintain that, although "The old conservatives run the risk of being swallowed up" by the neocons, nonetheless, "Some old conservatives also believe that the entire Right may benefit from neoconservative arguments against the Left and the libertarians. . . [such as] anarcho-capitalists who, like Murray Rothbard, called for a minimal state" (p. 70).^{*} For another: although the gentlemen who attended the Rockford meeting may know exactly what they mean when they use the concept paleoconservative, not everyone else does. In a recent interview with left-wing columnist Robert Kuttner, Heritage Foundation official and author Edward Haislmaier was quoted by Kuttner as opining that "contrary to the popular conception, a lot of people in the conservative movement are not absolute libertarians. Some of us are old-fashioned paleoconservatives. Our concern is with the structure of society and how the indi-

vidual fits into it. We don't believe that people should be left to die in the street."^{**}

So what have we here? Are the paleos the militant anti-statists of the (wishful?) thinking of some libertarians, or are they just dreary Moderate Republicans?

There is also the legitimate question of the extent to which the net is being cast in the search for blood for the new confederation. Latitudinarianism is a very good thing—and one that has often been given short shrift in the libertarian movement—if there is something real to be included. Paleoconservatism and paleolibertarianism I can accept as possible allies, even plausible ones, but when it comes to paleo-Birchism I have severe doubts. Yet Rockwell has seen fit to present his case for his new coalition in the pages of *The New American*, the biweekly journal of the John Birch Society ["Paleos, Neos, and Libertarians," Feb. 26].

There, sandwiched between articles on the Bilderbergers, international bankers, Illuminati, Bush-is-a-leftist, the-collapse-of-communism-is-a-hoax, and other standard Birchite fare, is Rockwell's heavily Birchized account of recent developments on the political right. I say "Birchized" because the whole article is crafted in such a way as to appeal to the self-importance and conspiratorial fantasies of the JBS. (We are told that the "Society has always attracted both paleoconservatives and paleolibertarians," that founder Robert Welch "was a quintessential Old Right figure," and that the neocons are working for some sort of sinister Rockefeller/Trilateral Commission new world order).

The Birchers are representatives of what I call the primitive patriotic right. They typically have a hodgepodge of political ideas ranging from libertarian to statist to simply silly. No doubt some of these people can be converted to a consistent pro-liberty position. No doubt many cannot. I suspect the proportion of likely prospects for the Rothbard-Rockwell cause is about the same as it is among the proverbial "men on the street." There is absolutely nothing wrong with chasing after such

people as the Birchers in a search for support. There is, however, something untoward about chasing after them like a rat in heat. One demeans oneself, intellectually of course, and in more subtle ways as well. The probable results aren't worth it.

There is another problem that arises: To be blunt, the increasing tendency to tie in libertarian values to some sort of Christian advocacy is simply wrong-headed. I'm not going to discuss whether Christianity is "right" or "wrong." I'm writing as a libertarian, not as a philosopher or theologian. The salient facts are two. One—except in the United States, Christian observance is in decline throughout the Western world, and even here it is holding its own, no more. In some recently ex-communist nations it held together for years as a cohesive, but at least minimally tolerated, force against state tyranny; whether its vitality will long survive the demise of its enemy remains to be seen. A conscious alliance with Christian values is not the way for libertarians to proceed. If someone doubts this, let him or her try to forge a coalition of church-goers in, say, Britain or France or West Germany or Sweden. He'd have about as much success as with a coalition of flat-earthers and Nazis.

Two—the future of freedom lies in the direction of increasing tolerance, not in that of conformism and the purging of deviants. Ultimately, this future might take the form of radically different communities living in peace, with a gaggle of communitarian hippies gobbling *Amanita muscaria* down the road from a town of Methodist farmers and small businessmen or a village of non-coercive socialists. Whether this pattern ever comes about or not, liberty is *not* going to be advanced, even on a very short-term basis, by some bizarre self-policing process to make sure we are all perfectly acceptable to some (alleged) host of pro-libertarian rightists who will support us as long as we sit up straight and keep our collars buttoned.

The recent attempt to bring certain types of conservatives into the libertarian tent, or at least into a workable arrangement with same, is by no means

^{*} Of course, this is not correct. For the past four decades MNR has called for *no* state.

^{**} Leaving people to die in the street is, as we all know, a fundamental libertarian tenet.

continued on page 56

Essay

A Population Crisis?

by Jane S. Shaw

A common complaint in the old days began: "There are too many people who . . ."; nowadays the complaint is simpler: "There are too many people." Jane Shaw explains why this development is *not* a sign of progress.

It is commonplace these days to decry the rapid growth of the world's population and to propose solutions—including forced contraceptive use—to curtail it. In its January 2, 1989, cover story on "The Planet of the Year," *Time Magazine* wrote: "Prospects are so dire that some environmentalists urge the world to adopt the goal of cutting in half the earth's population growth rate during the next decade." Professional alarmists such as Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute¹ and international figures such as Barber Conable, president of the World Bank, echo a similar theme.² What is surprising is that some libertarians, including John Hospers and Karl Hess, Jr, seem equally worried about population growth, although I'm sure they would not endorse coercive measures to slow it down.³

Malthusian worry about world population perhaps reached its zenith in 1973 when Robert S. McNamara, then president of the World Bank, stated that "[T]he threat of unmanageable population pressures is much like the threat of nuclear war. . . ." ⁴ In recent years, however, the push for population control has taken on a new dimension. It isn't so much that we are going to outstrip food production or end up with standing room only; the life-support system of the planet (i.e., the environment) is threatened.

One reason for this shift is that the alarmists have less to be alarmed about. Birth rates have declined somewhat in many parts of the underdeveloped world. A 1981 Nobel Institute symposium reported "statistical indications" spurring "hope that the in-

crease in the world's population may finally be arrested." ⁵ Secondly, years of studies trying to show the harms caused by population growth have virtually come to naught, and a few brave scholars—among them, Julian Simon, Professor of Business Administration at the University of Maryland, and Lord Peter Bauer, a British economist specializing in economic development—have communicated that fact fairly widely. If people are to worry about population growth, they are going to have to find new reasons, such as the destruction of the rain forest.

Most contemporary expressions of worry about population growth illustrate confusion, not insight. As I hope to make clear, population growth is far less harmful than conventional wisdom would have us believe and may not be harmful at all.

Concentrating on the supposed ills of growing population takes away attention from institutional problems that need to be corrected if poverty, hunger, and environmental destruction are to be reduced. For those of us interested in public policy, it is a blind alley. To the extent that we spend time lamenting population growth (as opposed to teaching policy-makers about

property rights, for example), we are diverted from our goals; to the extent that we endorse any government action to deal with population, we undermine our principles.⁶

The Production and Distribution of Human Beings

The economic literature has pretty much scotched the view that population growth is inherently and always bad. A recent review of economic studies of population by Allen C. Kelley in the prestigious (and mainstream) *Journal of Economic Literature* makes this clear. "While several models predict a negative net impact of population growth on economic development," he writes, "it is intriguing that the empirical evidence documenting this outcome is weak or nonexistent."⁷ For example, it is impossible to find a correlation between per capita income growth and population growth over a range of countries. And when Kelley reviewed studies of the impact of population on the savings rate, agricultural output, and capital dilution, the results were almost as ambiguous as the relationships between income and population. Kelley cautiously concluded that population growth has a negative effect on

growth in some countries, but probably has a positive effect in others and no effect at all in some.

Kelley's conclusion should eliminate excessive fear over population growth, and other studies suggest that we have even less reason to worry. Julian Simon, who used to be viewed as an extremist on the population issue

The initial effects of an increase in population on per capita income are negative, but over time population growth has positive feedback effects—not only increased output but also specialization and economies of scale.

because he refused to be alarmed about it, is becoming more accepted as an expert on this issue.

Simon has found that the initial effects of an increase in population on per capita income are negative, but over time population growth has positive feedback effects—not only increased output but also specialization and economies of scale, among others. In a recent book he offers a model for calculating an "optimum" population growth rate based on how one measures the current value of the future benefits. He concludes: "Together, the advantage of higher population growth at low discount rates [that is, giving great weight to the future benefits of population growth and not so much weight to the immediate effects], and the absence of disadvantage at high discount rates [giving heavy weight to the immediate effects], suggests that a strategy of higher population growth dominates a strategy of lower population growth."⁸

A. P. Thirlwall, who discusses Simon and others in a new book, points out that, unlike Simon, most economists have simply ignored the positive feedback effects of population growth. He observes somewhat drily that unless one considers the benefits of population growth it is impossible to understand "why societies are infinitely wealthier today than centuries

ago despite population expansion."⁹

F. A. Hayek, in the chapter on population growth in his recent book, *The Fatal Conceit*, provides an interesting perspective on these positive feedback effects. Not only does he cite work by Simon and others that counter fears that procreation is out of control, he also offers a theory to explain why Malthus's fears no longer apply. In the eighteenth century labor was largely homogeneous, says Hayek, so that an increase in the number of workers might well lead to diminishing returns from labor. In other words, Malthus had a point. However, in a complex market society, where people have many different skills and an incentive to specialize, additional labor may increase returns instead. "Human population grew in a sort of chain reaction in which greater density of occupation of territory tended to produce new opportunities for specialization and thus led to an increase of individual productivity and in turn to a further increase of numbers."¹⁰

Although scholarly literature does have an effect on popular opinion, there remains a lot of irrational notions about population growth that need to be dispelled. For example, Simon cites a widespread notion in the West that in parts of the world people "breed like flies"—that they "have sexual intercourse without taking thought or doing anything about the possible consequences."¹¹ (An educated friend told me that she felt that in parts of the world many people don't know the connection between sexual intercourse and having babies.)

This "breeding like flies" idea, while arrogant, has respectable origins in biology. Rats, flies, and meadow mice in a cage will keep multiplying until they die for lack of sustenance. But Simon notes that even Thomas Malthus recognized that people can and do act differently than mice and rats.

Of course, people make mistakes; young people especially may have babies that they do not want; and it is possible that husbands and wives differ over how many children they wish to have. However, it is not reasonable to assume that large numbers of people have large numbers of unwanted

babies over long periods of time, especially since this assumption contradicts much historical experience. As Peter Bauer writes, "Notwithstanding certain clearly definable exceptions, the wish of the great majority of mankind to have at least some children has extended across the ages, across cultures and across social classes. . . . The biblical injunction to be fruitful and to multiply is familiar. Less well known in the West is the traditional greeting addressed to brides in India: 'May you be the mother of eight sons.'"¹²

A more sophisticated version of the "breed like flies" idea takes shape in the concept, also based on biology, that there is a finite "carrying capacity" for land and thus for the planet as a whole. This idea is probably the most pernicious mistake related to population.

In 1968, in a famous essay, biologist Garrett Hardin introduced the "tragedy of the commons."¹³ He pointed out that if you place too many cows or sheep on a single pasture, they will overeat the grass because the land has

For a society of human beings the notion of a biologically limited carrying capacity is meaningless. In a world in which the most important resource is human capital, carrying capacity changes with human imagination and industry.

a limited capacity to support life. This tragedy occurs in commonly-owned property because each owner of livestock benefits directly from placing an additional animal on the grass, but personally only suffers a little from the deterioration of the grass, since all owners share in the deterioration. The incentives for each person, then, are to add animals to the point where the commons is ruined.

Hardin's anecdote has a number of implications—the most important of which is that either private property or collective controls are needed to avoid the commons tragedy. Regrettably,

however, his essay perpetuates the idea of "carrying capacity" for human beings. The truth is that for a society of human beings the notion of a biologically limited carrying capacity is meaningless. In a world in which the most

Deforestation, desertification, and soil depletion stem largely from cultural and legal institutions. When the institutions are askew, a growing population may unwisely farm marginal land or cut down forests that wouldn't otherwise be cut. This happens whether population is "low" or "high" by conventional standards.

important resource is human capital, carrying capacity changes with human imagination and industry. Physical resources are simply not the limiting factor in human society.

If "carrying capacity" were what mattered, Simon points out, Hong Kong should long ago have reached it, since it is virtually rock.¹⁴ Biologists might rejoin that Hong Kong is a little city-state that depends on the rest of the world for food, so the example is irrelevant—what if the *world* reaches its carrying capacity? Then there will be no place for food to come from.

But technology and human capital have made it possible for a small portion of the earth's land to support the world's population, and there is no reason to believe that additional production cannot be forthcoming. There has been significant improvement in food production in recent years in places like India, largely the result of the loosening of price controls. If the Soviet Union increases its minuscule market activity, it might be a net food exporter, as Russia once was. Clearly, institutions make an enormous difference in food production. Allen Kelley's review of studies of the relationship between population and food production found that population *per se* is relatively unimportant in determining agricultural output. Malnutrition, he

writes, "is often not the result of insufficient aggregate production, but is due to the way in which food and income are distributed."¹⁵ He cites work by Amartya K. Sen indicating that famines sometimes occur in regions where there is excess food production.

Some people will still contend that carrying capacity matters. Eventually, they will say, the world must reach its carrying capacity; we will some day run out of standing room if population continues to grow. I suspect that pictures of throngs of bus riders in Beijing and beaches teeming with vacationers make people think of this sort of "carrying capacity."

But the only conceivable reason that population could grow to that point would be the existence of an imbalance between an individual's cost and the cost to society of additional children, and that can happen only if some of the costs are socialized. Like the livestock owner who has an incentive to add another cow to the common grazing land, each person may benefit slightly more by having an additional child (who could be a productive worker as a child and a support in old age) than he or she suffers by the addi-

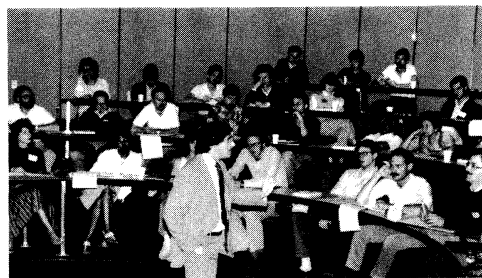
tional demand on resources.

Libertarians should have no trouble responding to this point. If families pay the costs of the resources they use, there will not be a distinction between their personal costs and the costs to society. To the extent that resources are privately held, private and social costs will be the same. The more goods and services that are subsidized by governments, however, the more the social cost of children will exceed the family's personal cost. Peter Bauer points out that in such cases (which, he observes, are more likely to occur in developed than developing countries), "the remedy lies in the reduction of these expenditures, or a modification of their incidence so that the parents of larger families are not so heavily subsidized."¹⁶

Of course, "carrying capacity" could be reached if human talents are not permitted to realize their potential. In some countries entrenched interests are unwilling to allow change because it threatens their positions. For example, in recent years development specialists have argued in favor of private property rights or at least local autonomy in many developing nations. Yet

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national governments have little incentive to give control to individuals or tribes or villages. Usually, their most important political constituents are in the cities, and allowing rural people to act independently may undermine the central government's power.

In both of the above cases, then, the problem lies primarily with government—in one case, with socialized costs; in the other, with entrenched interests using government to maintain wealth or power. There is one other concern about population growth that I consider worth addressing. Third World countries are experiencing a situation that may be completely new; its uniqueness is sufficient reason to pay attention.

The advent of modern medicine has reduced death rates quite rapidly

Actions of the Brazilian government — road-building, government-sponsored settlement plans, and tax and credit incentives to cattle raising — have played a critical role in the deforestation process.

in developing countries while birth rates have not slowed nearly as much. This differs from the experience during the industrialization of Western Europe, when growing prosperity was accompanied by a gradual reduction in both death rates and birth rates. With death rates low and birth rates high, the current growth rate of world population, says Thirlwall,¹⁷ is just under 2% per year and "has no precedent historically."

While we rejoice in the reduction in suffering and loss that lower death rates signify, it is conceivable that this rapid improvement has thrown social systems temporarily out of kilter. Perhaps people would like to reduce birth rates to bring them into line with death rates, but traditional attitudes and customs encouraging high birth rates are too powerful in the short run to change quickly. If this is the case, we would expect them to change gradually.

Alternatively, perhaps many people in the Third World prefer having

large families even with low death rates. (In other words, perhaps they simply don't agree with the Western experts who think that they ought to reduce their birth rates.) John C. Caldwell has offered an interesting explanation of why this may be the case.¹⁸

Caldwell argues that birth rates reflect the flow of wealth. In developing countries wealth often flows from children to parents. The benefits of having children are much greater than the costs to parents, even in the short run: Children often add to the family income even while they are young and they offer wealth and security later in life; their costs are low, since the families do not invest significantly in their education or long-term health. In contrast, in the industrialized world, where education, skills, and the expectations of achievement are higher, children are much more expensive to rear. A large family can be a financial drain for many years.

If this hypothesis is correct, birth rates may remain high in the Third World until educational expectations and economic growth change the relative private costs and benefits of rearing young children. It also means that steps taken to improve prosperity and offer greater opportunities will slow population growth, too.

Population and Environmental Destruction

The above arguments make the case that population growth is not the cause of famine and poverty. But what about environmental destruction? A recent article in *Scientific American*¹⁹ illustrates how the dominant worry has shifted from fear of "standing room only" to concern about the environment. The article's subhead reads: "Development will stabilize populations, but will development come before population growth and harsh technologies do irremediable damage to the planet's life-support capacity?"

Curiously, while the article is sprinkled with statements about the "exponential growth of population and its attendant assault on the environment," it lists relatively few actual examples of "irremediable damage" supposedly caused by overpopulation. The specific problems cited are deforestation in Thailand, Malaysia, and Brazil, and

soil depletion in India and the mountains of Java. (The other big problem cited in the article is the effect of automobiles which is said to be very bad, especially since the world is using more and more of them. Just what the ecological damage cars cause beyond localized air pollution is not stated, possibly because we are expected to know that already.) In a similar vein, a review in *Science of Biodiversity* (edited by E. O. Wilson and Frances M. Peter) commented that there was "much agreement [among the authors] that the growth of the human population is the fundamental cause of the loss of biological diversity."²⁰

This entire line of argument reminds me of the claim by a prominent local citizen of Bozeman, Montana, that overpopulation is the cause of traffic congestion and air pollution (mostly from wood-burning stoves) in our town of 25,000 people. There is a kernel of truth in this statement, but that's all. We would have less air pollution and less traffic congestion in Bozeman if there were fewer people, but you don't need a lot of people to cause these things. Two cars (or two horses) can cause traffic congestion on a narrow road if there is no rule as to who has the right of way. The cause of air pollution is the fact that there is no private ownership of clear views, and the cause of traffic congestion is primarily the fact that there is no pricing of street usage to bring the supply of road capacity into line with demand for it.²¹

Similarly, deforestation, desertification, and soil depletion stem largely, if not entirely, from cultural and legal institutions. When the institutions are askew, a growing population may unwisely farm marginal land or cut down forests that wouldn't otherwise be cut. This happens where the total population is "high" or "low" by conventional standards.

Readers may be surprised to find out that the population density of countries cited as causing environmental destruction is often lower than that of developed nations. According to a 1990 almanac, Brazil has a population density of 47 persons per square mile; Malaysia, 132; Thailand, 277; and India, 658. Great Britain beats all these

except India with its density of 601 per square mile; France (where pronouncements about the dangers of *depopulation* are frequently made) has a density of 252 persons per square mile; and the Netherlands' density is 931 per square mile. These figures don't prove anything about the local impact of growing population, of course, but they should give pause to people who sloppily place blame on "overpopulation" without considering institutional structures and other factors.²²

The *Scientific American* article cited above illustrates the kind of generalization that ignores important facts. "In Brazil peasants from overpopulated regions have destroyed millions of acres of rain forest in an attempt to eke out a living from soil that is essentially unsuitable for farming," writes Nathan Keyfitz. He completely neglects the amply-documented role of government policies in Brazil.

To give you an idea of how well-documented this role is, consider a paper by Dennis J. Mahar prepared for the World Bank.²³ Mahar states that policies of the Brazilian government "designed to open up Amazonia for human settlement and to encourage certain types of economic activity have played a key role in the deforestation process." Road-building, government-sponsored settlement plans, and tax and credit incentives to cattle raising are among these policies.

Brazil is not alone. Malcolm Gillis and Robert Repetto, after studying deforestation in seven countries, concluded that in each case a leading cause was the "largely unintended, avoidable consequences of government policies."²⁴ (The authors italicized this statement.)

In the Sahel region of Africa, national policies have contributed to desertification by destroying the traditional quasi-private rights that led to careful use of water. The region had a tradition of private ownership under which the builder of a well had the first right to its use. This tradition encouraged people to build wells and allowed the builder some control over the amount of the grazing around each well. In recent years, however, national governments in the region have built wells that are open to everyone. Because

there are no clear usage rights, more livestock owners are drawn to the wells than the surrounding grasslands can sustain. The result is over-grazing, which leads to desertification.²⁵

The list of environmental problems caused by governments is quite long and where governments aren't at fault, common ownership with open access often is. A. John De Boer, an agricultural economist who has studied environmental degradation in the Himalayas, says flatly: "Overgrazing of common land is the largest contributor to on-site soil erosion."²⁶ Species are disappearing in large part because no one owns them and thus no entrepreneur can capture the benefits of saving them for future generations when they might be valuable as, say, medicines.

Since the environmentally destruc-

tive aspect of the population issue is somewhat new for scholars, we don't have a barrage of statistical studies that attempt to correlate environmental ills with population growth. In the *Journal of Economic Literature*, Kelley treats the issue as largely outside the scope of his study. However, in his brief comment he recognizes the importance of institutions. Potential environmental effects of population growth are "important matters, because institutional mechanisms (enforced government regulations and private property rights) are sometimes unavailable or insufficient to assure an appropriate use of resources over time," he says.²⁷

If that is the case, surely it's the institutional mechanisms that ought to be straightened out rather than people's proactive activities. □

Notes:

- 1 Lester Brown *et al.*, *State of the World 1989* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1989) p.188.
- 2 Speaking at a 1988 World Bank annual meeting in Berlin (September 27, 1988), he said that "it is imperative that developing countries 'renew and expand efforts to limit population growth.'"
- 3 Karl Hess, Jr, cited population growth as one of the "most serious problems facing mankind" in *Liberty*, May 1989, p. 15, and Hoppers blamed deforestation in Nepal and the Andes mountains and desertification in Africa on the expansion of human population in *Liberty*, January 1989, p. 48.
- 4 Quoted by Allen C. Kelley in "Economic Consequences of Population Change," *Journal of Economic Literature*, Vol. XXVI (December 1988), p. 1685.
- 5 *Population and the World Economy in the 21st Century*, edited by Just Faaland (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p.3.
- 6 I suspect that many people have an emotion-based tendency to worry about uncontrolled population growth. I think this tendency exists pretty much independent of the facts. It may stem from an honorable but uninformed reaction to poverty: If people are poor because there isn't enough food (or shelter, or money), then if there were fewer people, each would be better off. Or, it may be more deep-seated. After all, in the 1930s there was great alarm about population—but it was fear that world population would decline. Perhaps we react to procreation with fear because it is so inherently private and outside the control of policy-makers.
- 7 See Allen C. Kelley, *op. cit.*, pp. 1685–1728.
- 8 Julian L. Simon, *Theory of Population and Economic Growth* (New York: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), p.147.
- 9 A. P. Thirlwall, *Growth and Development* (MacMillan Education, 1989), p. 157.
- 10 F. A. Hayek, *The Fatal Conceit* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 126.
- 11 Julian Simon, *The Ultimate Resource* (Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 175.
- 12 Peter T. Bauer, *Equality, the Third World, and Economic Delusion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 62.
- 13 Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons," in Hardin, Garrett, and John Baden, *Managing the Commons* (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co.), 1977. Originally published in *Science*.
- 14 See "Why Do We Still Think Babies Create Poverty?" by Julian L. Simon, *The Washington Post*, October 13, 1985, p. B1.
- 15 Kelley, *op. cit.*, p. 1711.
- 16 Peter T. Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 64.
- 17 A. P. Thirlwall, *idem*.
- 18 Summarized by P. T. Bauer, *op. cit.* pp. 59–61.
- 19 Nathan Keyfitz, "The Growing Human Population," *Scientific American*, Vol. 261, No. 3, September 1989, p. 119.
- 20 David B. Wake, "Life in Danger," *Science*, Vol. 243, January 27, 1989, p. 554.
- 21 For more on the causes of environmental problems, the reader might wish to see my articles in the November 1988 and July 1989 *Liberty*.
- 22 From *The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1990* (New York: Pharos Books, 1990).
- 23 Dennis J. Mahar, "Government Policies and Deforestation in Brazil's Amazon Region" (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, no date.)
- 24 Malcolm Gillis and Robert Repetto, "Deforestation and Government Policy," International Center for Economic Growth (affiliated with the Institute for Contemporary Studies, San Francisco). This article is based on research for the book *Public Policy and the Misuse of Forest Resources* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- 25 Dirck Stryker, "Technology, Human Pressure, and Ecology in the Arid and Semi-Arid Tropics," in *Environment and the Poor: Development Strategies for a Common Agenda*, edited by H. Jeffrey Leonard (New Brunswick, U.S.A.: Transaction Books, 1989), p. 95.
- 26 A. John De Boer, "Sustainable Agricultural Approaches to Hillside Agricultural Development," in H. Jeffrey Leonard, *op. cit.* p. 139.
- 27 Kelley, *op. cit.*, p. 1718.

Dispute

Liberty, War, and Intervention

Many libertarians believe that non-interventionism—political isolationism—follows clearly from their principles. In our last issue, Stephen Cox argued vigorously that it does not. Like an A-Bomb on a cobalt stockpile, Cox's essay was bound to produce fall-out. Here is *some* of it.

Against Intervention— A Reply to Stephen Cox

Sheldon L. Richman

... the "true secret" of despots . . . is to employ one nation in cutting the throats of another, so that neither may have time to reform the abuses in their own domestic government. I would say on the contrary, the true secret of the people is to remain at peace; and not only so, but to be on their guard against false alarms about the intended aggressions of their neighbours, which when too credulously believed, give to government all the political advantages of war, without its risk; for they keep men's minds in a degrading state of fear and dependence, and afford the excuse for continually increasing government expenditure.

—Richard Cobden, "1793 and 1853"

Stephen Cox fears that noninterventionism could become part of the libertarian "creed," rather than merely one option among many to be considered on a case-by-case basis. ("Isolating the Error of Isolationism," March 1990) To combat this he makes probably the strongest argument against noninterventionism that can be made from a libertarian position. Nevertheless, his argument is vague and flawed to the core.

If by "creedal isolationism" he means a noninterventionism derived *a priori*, he is right to be suspicious. But such is not the classic noninterventionism formulated by Cobden and Bright and other liberals. That policy is derived from social and economic theory,

the libertarian concern for individual liberty, and a historically ascertained knowledge of the nature of the state. (The fact that historical knowledge, that is, experience, is involved does not make the noninterventionist conclusion "contingent.") The argument is indeed "creedal" in the sense that it proceeds from liberal, or libertarian, principles. But, I hasten to add, this is not an anarchist argument. The Manchesterites and Thomas Jefferson, minimum-government advocates all, understood that "one's own" state needs to be kept on a short leash because it always shows a tendency to expand and swallow up liberty.

The state should be denied the authority and means to intervene not because some abstract, proper objective of intervention can't be imagined, but because we know what states are and how they behave. There is an eternal, irreconcilable struggle between, as Albert Jay Nock put it, social power and state power. One gains only at the expense of the other. In war the state gains in the manner of a ratchet, because even if it gives up power at war's end, it has more than it had at the beginning. The domestic blessings of war have been the autocratic presidency, the draft, the income tax (including the withholding tax), economic regimentation, domestic spying, suppression of dissent, censorship, sedition trials, etc. This is no chance connection between war and the growth of government power. As Thomas Paine wrote in *Rights of Man*, "taxes were not raised to

carry on wars, . . . wars were raised to carry on taxes." Cobden understood the connection well when he said in 1849,

Warlike governments can find resources only in the savings of merchants, manufacturers, farmers, and rentiers, and we appeal to them, in the name of humanity and their own interest, to refuse to lend their aid to a barbarous system which paralyses trade, ruins industry, destroys capital, stops work, and waxes fat through the blood and the arms of their brothers.

Because of this, all arguments from analogy involving individuals in their neighborhoods or private organizations (more than "faintly ludicrous"—Cox's term) are out of place. Cox makes much of such analogies: If individuals can properly defend themselves against a killer before he enters their homes, why can't states intervene abroad? If individuals can liberate people from tyranny, why can't the state? Cox says that if libertarians are not against roads, schools, and military intervention *per se*, then they shouldn't oppose the state's providing these things when it is the only way to get them. "Rare is the anarchist who would prefer no roads to government roads," Cox writes. "Rare also should be the anarchist who would prefer letting tyrannies thrive to uprooting them by the action of freer governments [sic!], if the intervention were successful in practice." (As noted, anarchism is irrelevant here. It is nothing but a red herring.)

The problem here is that the rules for the state ought to be different—because the state is different. The state

is not merely a group of individuals, it is a group that is in a highly peculiar relationship to the rest of us. It is essentially out of our control, especially in foreign affairs. We find an elaboration of this point in Randolph Bourne's essay "The State." Bourne, who coined the principle "war is the health of the state," pointed out, for example, that the democratic checks on the government's war-making powers are chimeras. He wrote:

The formality by which Parliaments and Congresses declare war is the merest technicality. Before such a declaration can take place, the country will have been brought to the very brink of war by the foreign policy of the Executive. A long series of steps on the downward path, each one more fatally committing the unsuspecting country to a warlike course of action will have been taken without either the people or its representatives being consulted or expressing its feeling. When the declaration of war is finally demanded by the Executive, the Parliament or Congress could not refuse it without reversing the course of history, with-

The state should be denied the authority and means to intervene not because some abstract, proper objective of intervention can't be imagined, but because we know what states are and how they behave.

out repudiating what has been representing itself in the eyes of the other States as the symbol and interpreter of the nation's will and animus." ("The State," *War and Intellectuals: Collected Essays, 1915-1919* [New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964], p. 83.)

Bourne knew about the *Maine* and the *Lusitania*; he didn't have to live to see the threat from nationalist Latin American leaders in the 1920s or Roosevelt's goading the German warships in the North Atlantic or Pearl Harbor or the Soviet threat to the United States via North Korea or the vital need to install the Shah of Iran or the Castro menace 90 miles from Miami or the danger from the

Dominican Republic or the Gulf of Tonkin "incident" or the endangered medical students in Grenada or the threat to Harlingen, Texas from the Sandinistas or Noriega's poisoning of our children, *ad nauseam*. (As Breaker Morant said in that great movie, "Well, that's what comes of empire-building.")

Libertarian pro-interventionists such as Cox ask, in effect, what if we intervened only when we knew that our intervention would have benign effects? Hard experience teaches that if we know anything about intervention, it is that it will usually have bad effects. We've already noted the domestic harm. On the other end, it has typically brought mass murder, economic devastation, social upheaval, and revolutionary regimes worse than their predecessors. (The bush-league interventions that did not lead to all these things, such as Grenada, hardly refute the point.) This is the wisdom passed down by the Old Right, particularly by Robert Taft and Herbert Hoover, who learned from the horrible experience of World War I (for Woodrow Wilson, an idealistic war against illiberal Prussianism. It brought on the Bolshevik revolution, Fascism, the Great Depression, Nazism, World War II, and the Cold War. Not bad for a year's work). As Frank Chodorov wrote in the 1950s, a Soviet conquest of Western Europe would be bad for the people there, but would it be worse than turning their homes into a battlefield for a third time in this century? And would the semi-freedom of the American people have survived even if the U.S. had "won"?

Cox demeans the concern with the practical effects of interventionism as somehow less exalted than a moral objection. But if moral principles are themselves a practical necessity, as I and others believe, this distinction is bogus. As the natural-law critics of Bentham used to say, the moral is the practical. Cox concedes that morally motivated actions can have unforeseen bad results, but insists this should be no bar to intervention. Come on; we already know that send-

ing the Marines, helicopter gunships, and warships that fire shells the weight of Volkswagens to a distant land will kill innocent people. Good intentions offer no refuge from moral indictment. Reckless disregard of consequences also deserves condemnation.

Cox also feels he has to take a swipe at revisionist history, as if it had been concocted to bolster the case for "creedal isolationism." But this, like much of

The rules for the state ought to be different—because the state is different. The state is not merely a group of individuals, it is a group that is in a highly peculiar relationship to the rest of us. It is essentially out of our control, especially in foreign affairs.

the article, has the aroma of vulgar dilettantism—especially when he springs on us the startling finding that the Soviet consolidation of control over Eastern Europe couldn't have been a response to NATO because it predated NATO. Now let me get this straight: is Cox saying that the Cold War revisionists, many of them eminent scholars, have carelessly (or dishonestly?) based their case on the assertion that something which happened in 1949 caused things that happened in 1946-48? That's obviously ridiculous. (Notice he cites no one's work on this point, except for a reference to conversations.) Actually,



"It's all very well to talk about abolishing war, but what do you propose to replace it with?"

the argument is that other postwar American activities provoked the consolidation. If Cox would check the work of, among others, Gar Alperovitz (*Cold War Essays*, Anchor Press), Thomas Patterson (*Meeting the Communist Threat*, Oxford University Press), or Leonard Liggio (*Why the Futile Crusade?*, Center for Libertarian Studies), he'll find some of the details. He could also check the contemporaneous remarks of Taft and other Old Rightists, not to mention those of George Kennan, John Foster Dulles, and Charles Bohlen.

Cox's unsupported aspersions notwithstanding, revisionist history is invaluable. Given what we know about the state, we reasonably suspect that it has—how shall I put it?—not told us everything about its activities. A closer look is always in order. This does not mean that every suspicion is valid or that everything going by the name "revisionism" is true, only that there is a presumption that the state's version of an event is probably shaded by interests other than the public's. (For exemplary revisionist history, see Cobden's "1793 and 1853" [in *Political Writings of Richard Cobden*], quoted at the top of this piece.)

Finally, Cox falls victim to the common fallacy of assuming that intervention can be restricted to cases where sound moral principle sanctions it: where there is a real threat (to whom exactly? in whose judgment?) or when other people are victims of dictatorship. (Oddly, he doesn't feel it is necessary to separately justify these two kinds of circumstances; the latter is sheer messianic Wilsonianism.) Why does he assume that these, and only these, will be the kinds of cases in which intervention occurs? Cox is inexplicably oblivious of the pernicious dynamic of the state, a hallmark of liberal thought for hundreds of years. History and a good deal of liberal social theory (the latest of which is Public Choice) suggest that Cox would not get his way: the state's agenda, especially in foreign affairs, is set not by the interests of the general public, but by particular interests—set in the most devious manner by two-faced leaders who seem to have no compunction about secretly plotting to send boys to their deaths for classified reasons those boys would never accept.

How much more experience do we need before we understand this?

The libertarian pro-interventionists, especially those of an analytical mind, will ask, "But what if we could guarantee that the state would only intervene for libertarian reasons?"

In other words, if the state were not the state, would it make a difference?

And if elephants could fly, should the zoo move them to the aviary? □

Degrees of Freedom— A Response to Richman

Stephen Cox

Although I enjoyed reading Sheldon Richman's rejoinder to my essay on isolationism, I found his thesis less challenging than I expected. "War is the health of the state": sure it is—and no libertarian needs to review the purple passages of Bourne's work, or Cobden's, to find this out.

But isolationism is also the health of the state. Isolationism benefits tyrannical states by securing them from intervention by others and preserving for them "the authority and means to intervene" that Richman's argument would deny to freer societies.

Although Richman refers to me as "pro-interventionist," I am no more "interventionist" than I am "isolationist." I insist only that isolationism be considered as means to an end rather than as a creed to be followed no matter what its practical, historical consequences may be. In his second paragraph, Richman shows his uneasiness about endorsing any "creed," but quickly yields the point. Yes, he has a creed, and although it has something to do with "historically ascertained knowledge," it is derived from "principle" instead of historical "contingen[cy]."

I'm not sure that I understand this, but I do understand Richman's initial, moderate statement of his creed: the state tends to expand, and deserves watching; it tends particularly to expand in time of war (all types of war, apparently, even purely defensive ones).

But this modest generalization about *tendencies* is by no means sufficient to proscribe, in all conceivable circumstances, the intervention of any state in the affairs of any other—and Richman plainly intends to proscribe *all* such intervention. To do so, he pictures the

state, not just as something that should always be watched and often be cropped, but as something that is always totally evil and incapable of any good, of any kind.

Here Richman goes a great deal farther than many of his libertarian sources (and not so libertarian sources such as Randolph Bourne and Herbert Hoover) were prepared to go since many of them were statesmen who thought that some relative good could be done by the states in which they participated. This, of course, is the point that I attempted to make when I said that even anarchists, let alone limited-government people, should not "prefer letting tyrannies thrive to uprooting them by the action of freer governments."

Richman does not respond to that point, other than to insert an outraged "[sic!] after "freer governments" and to assert that "anarchism is. . . nothing but a red herring." I do not understand why anarchism should be called a red herring by a writer who has apparently adopted the ultra-anarchist position that every state is just as unfree, and therefore just as evil, as any other, and that the state is always such a peculiar entity as to render us incapable of judging it

Isolationism benefits tyrannical states by securing them from intervention by others and preserving for them "the authority and means to intervene" that Richman's argument would deny to freer societies.

by the ethical rules that we apply to individuals.

I am surprised to see this latter argument, so often used to justify all the nasty things that states do, advanced in such a way as to question the legitimacy of any reliance whatever on state power. I am more surprised, however, to see the degree to which Richman takes the doctrine of the moral equivalency of states. He asserts that "Soviet consolidation of control over Eastern Europe" was "provoked" by "American activities," as if American attempts at

"containment" were as dangerous to liberty as Stalinism was. You don't have to regard the American state as wholly pure in motive and effect to recognize that Stalin needed very little "provocation" in his campaign of enslavement, or to regret the equanimity with which Richman (citing Frank Chodorov, as if respectable authority were the guarantee of valid argument) contemplates "a Soviet conquest of

them. And the fact that one disagrees with certain types of scholarship need not imply that one has failed to read or understand it. It's quite possible simply to disagree with authority, even with isolationist authority. □

Perpetual Intervention— Second Response To Cox

Sheldon L. Richman

Through the fog of misinterpretation that constitutes Stephen Cox's reply, one can discern two points:

1. that "freer governments" may properly intervene in other nations to save people from tyranny, and
2. that "modest generalizations about the tendencies" of the state to grow in the exercise of foreign policy are "not sufficient to proscribe, in all conceivable circumstances, the intervention of any state in the affairs of another . . ."

I will confine my final reply to these points. Cox's wish to license "freer governments" to punish the less-free gov-

ernments has several problems. First, how much "freer" does a government need to be? Does it qualify if it is a smidgen freer than the worst on Earth? Second, if Cox's standard for judging governments is more than merely relative, his position collapses in contradiction. Giving a "freer government" the powers it would need to pursue Cox's preferred foreign policy would transmogrify it from a "free government" into its opposite, and thus from an intervener to an intervenee.

Third, Cox's policy is a blueprint for perpetual war. There will probably be better and worse governments for some time to come. If the people of the "freer governments" must fight and finance wars of liberation around the globe, just when do they get to enjoy their rights under a "freer government"? I quoted Cobden in my first response not to display his purple passages, but because he addressed this critical question—which is more than can be said for Cox.

If we, the citizens of a "freer government," are roaming the world reforming

You don't have to regard the American state as wholly pure in motive and effect to recognize that Stalin needed very little "provocation" in his campaign of enslavement.

Western Europe," comparing enslavement to the alternative of destruction rather than to the alternative of imperfect but very considerable freedom and peace.

The method of Richman's isolationist argument (a method unfortunately typical of its genre) is the relentless posing of false, absolutist alternatives: Is intervention always right, or always wrong? Was America wholly right or wholly wrong in its response to Bolshevism? Would Western Europe be better red, or dead? Should we refuse all military aid to foreign victims of dictatorship, or should we succumb abjectly to "sheer messianic Wilsonianism"?

The best answer, I think, is one that rejects all such absolutist alternatives. Intervention is not always right, and neither is isolation; America was not without error during the Cold War period, but it acted a hell of a lot better than its Stalinist enemies; not every war is Mr. Wilson's War; and Western Europe is neither red nor dead, very possibly because of American containment of communism. Richman asks, "Would the semi-freedom [sic] of the American people have survived even if the U. S. had 'won' [a third world war]?" Funny, I thought we *had* won, and without the third world war.

Finally, speaking of false alternatives, I wish to observe that one can disagree with *some* types of revisionist history without "aspers[ing]" all of

Is there a libertarian foreign policy? — I think Stephen Cox's essay on isolationism may open a new chapter in the libertarian debate about foreign policy. Now the moralistic isolationists must face the issue: is non-interventionism an *a priori* moral imperative that must be followed whatever the consequences? or is it a strategy that we advocate because its consequences are good for us?

If the *a priori*-ists (whom Cox calls "creedal isolationists") are to be taken seriously, they have to present a defense or derivation of their theory. Mere assertion will not do. I suspect that this cannot be done, but I am willing to consider the arguments of the proponents.

If it turns out that the *a priori*-ists are unequal to the task, then radical isolationists will not necessarily have to concede to Cox that every foreign policy question must be answered on its individual merits by speculating on its consequences in an unprincipled, pragmatic fashion. The choice is not limited to these two extremes.

There may be such a thing as a principled *a posteriori* isolationism, based on an analysis of foreign interventionism

employing the same sort of thinking that enables libertarians to know that government price fixing will not end inflation and heal an ailing economy or that enables an auto mechanic to know that an automobile engine whose crankcase is filled with beer and whose gas tank is filled with lemonade is not going to provide reliable transportation.

Indeed, I believe the rudiments of such an analysis can be found in Isabel Paterson's classic, *The God of the Machine*. Paterson argues that intervention cannot achieve its goal of destroying tyranny, but that, happily for us, tyranny cannot sustain itself; in fact, as it expands its power, it destroys itself. (Curiously, Cox cites Paterson's argument as a rationale for intervention as a means of limiting the growth of tyranny long enough for it to burn itself out.)

What are the necessary and sufficient conditions, if any, to justify intervention? Is state intervention ever justified? Is it ever in our interest to take action against foreign tyranny? If so, under what conditions? If these questions have easy answers, I haven't heard them. It's time for libertarians to attend to these issues.—Ethan O. Waters

others, we are not likely to be vigilant about reforming our own system in order to expand liberty at home. As we disdainfully look out on the world, we will easily find some other government that is in more urgent need of reform than our own. Perhaps someday, after we have brought the blessings of freedom to the last dictatorship on earth, Albania, say, then we can turn our attention to our own government. Someday.

Fourth, in calling on the American government to overthrow others, Cox goes well beyond the position of most of the libertarians who reject strict non-interventionism. These libertarians have criticized the noninterventionists on the grounds that they construe national security too narrowly. They approve of intervention, but only to protect the American people. Although I disagree with them, they at least intend the American state to do no more than protect the lives and properties of Americans. Thus it qualifies as a limited-government position. Cox's position is far different. He proposes that the U.S. government do something more than merely defend American lives and

property. Yet he offers no support for the expansion of the powers of the state beyond what minimum-government libertarians have traditionally favored. Doesn't such a bold departure require some justification? Or has libertarianism become uncoupled from a concern to limit the powers of government? As one can see, this is not a dispute between anarchism and minarchism, but rather between anarchism and minarchism on the one hand, and *maxarchism* on the other.

Cox's other point—that recognition of the state's tendency to grow is not enough to bar intervention "in all conceivable circumstances"—is frustrating because I raised this key issue in my first response and Cox has no reply beyond this unsupported, irrelevantly speculative assertion. Why isn't it enough? These tendencies—these *demonstrated inclinations*—are not to be taken lightly. As Proudhon described them:

To be *governed* is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the

wisdom nor the virtue to do so. To be *governed* is to be at every operation, at every transaction noted, registered, counted, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, prevented, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished. It is, under pretext of public utility, and in the name of the general interest, to be placed under contribution, drilled, fleeced, exploited, monopolized, extorted from, squeezed, hoaxed,

It is not far-fetched to imagine that formerly communist countries will someday be freer than ours. By Cox's standard, they will then be justified in invading the United States and liberating us.

robbed; then, at the slightest resistance, the first word of complaint, to be repressed, fined, vilified, harassed, hunted down, abused, clubbed, disarmed, bound, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed; and to crown all, mocked, ridiculed, derided, outraged, dishonored. That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality.

Why is Cox's assertion irrelevantly speculative? Note his phrase "in all conceivable circumstances." This means all imaginable circumstances not entailing a logical contradiction. But useful political philosophy does not address all conceivable circumstances. It guides us in the real world. This is something I tried to get Cox to take up. Obviously, I failed miserably.

Instead of worrying about all conceivable circumstances, let's think about the kinds of circumstances we typically find ourselves in. In that context we can readily see the danger of giving the state the power to pursue an interventionist foreign policy. We know from long experience that a political elite and its special-interest patrons use the government's foreign policy powers to serve their own economic and other interests. In the process they imperil the rest of us.

Do we really want to allow the state such authority because intervention might be worthwhile in some *conceivable* circumstance? Has Cox any idea how

Cox Agonistes — If by creedal isolationism Stephen Cox means consistent opposition to foreign interventionism based on anarchism, as he seems to, why must he write 4,000 words on the subject? It seems to me that if one accepts the central tenet of anarchism—that the state has no proper or moral functions, hence ought to be abolished—then it is apparent that the state ought not engage in foreign intervention. If Cox wants to attack this theory, then he should attack it at its root: is the anarchist theory of the state correct?

Personally, I am an advocate of a government with functions that are so limited that most political thinkers might mistake me for an anarchist, though in the argot of libertarian anarchism I am a "minarchist." Unlike the anarchist, I consider the state to be an inevitable consequence of human interaction but one that can easily do great harm and must therefore be strictly limited to adjudicating certain kinds of disputes. I am certainly no advocate of what Cox calls "creedal isolationism." But no more am I an advocate of the

kind of foreign adventurism that Cox seems to defend.

It appears to me that even libertarians who advocate a more powerful state than I—say those who admit an armed defense force or a police force—would have serious qualms about accepting Cox's state interventionism, even if Cox is correct in saying that intervention was needed to halt the spread of tyranny. The problem of foreign tyranny seems no different to me from the problem of domestic poverty or disease. Libertarians do not argue that poverty is not a problem—they argue that it is not best solved by government action. Libertarians do not argue that cancer is not a problem—they argue that it is best attacked by private means. If tyranny is a problem that must be contained, let it be contained by the voluntary actions of individual human beings, just as we "contain" the problems of poverty or disease—or the need for shoes, for that matter.

The burden of proof is always on those who want government to take action against a problem. —RWB

foreign policy is made in this country? Does he know how elites manipulate the people with misinformation while maneuvering them along paths they would never take if they were free to choose? Is he aware of how the U.S. got into the Spanish-American War or World War I (see Walter Karp's *The Politics of War*)? Or World War II (see Charles Tansill's *Back Door to War*)? Or the Vietnam War (on the Gulf of Tonkin "incident" see Jonathan Kwitny's *Endless Enemies*)? Anyone who has an inkling of how we were embroiled in those catastrophes by the lies and intrigues of our "leaders" will be horrified by Cox's suggestion that the U.S. government could be restricted to intervening only for "good" reasons and without what the defense strategists call "collateral damage."

By doing foreign policy at the level of philosophical speculation, Cox makes himself irrelevant to fruitful political discussion. That's his choice.

War is the health of the state. (Cox concedes this, then ignores it.) Nonintervention is not. As we see in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, tyranny burns itself out without our having to inflict liberation—and collateral damage—on its subjects. But now that the cold war is over and communist governments are dismantling themselves, does the U.S. state show any signs of abandoning its war-footing and shrinking back to something resembling limited government? George Bush says NATO and taxpayer giveaways are needed more than ever. This is where Cox's policy leads. It is not far-fetched to imagine that formerly communist countries will someday be freer than ours. By Cox's standard, they will then be justified in invading the United States and liberating us.

Enough of this. I'll close by naming one more scholar, a libertarian, not to invoke an authority, but because we can learn much from him. In his book *Crisis and Leviathan*, Robert Higgs documents beyond question that the greatest cause of the growth of U.S. government power in the 20th century has been war. A bell-couse foreign policy is thus the deadliest enemy of freedom and capitalism. No libertarian who has failed to digest this lesson has any business writing about foreign policy. □

Remaining Questions, Summary Suggestions

Stephen Cox

I'm glad that Sheldon Richman decided to reply, and re-reply, to my notions about isolationism. I'm not sure how our readers will feel, but I've had fun, and I think that Richman has, too.

He's enjoyed the opportunity to specify what people should read, and what people should believe, before they have "any business writing about foreign policy." I've enjoyed the opportunity to congratulate myself smugly on the greater liberty I'm willing to grant to intellectual opponents.

He's enjoyed picturing me as a dreaded *maxarchist*, one who believes that there could possibly be circumstances in which the American government might do more to combat tyranny than "merely defend[ing] American lives and property." I've enjoyed contemplating Richman's curiously parochial commentary on the idea that "where liberty lives, there is my country." I've also been able to smile at his apparent impression that the defense of American lives and property was not involved in this country's intervention against Stalin.

Richman has had as much fun as a Baptist preacher, quoting the texts he likes; I've had as much fun as the preacher's audience, reading the texts he quotes.

But now that Richman and I have had our fun, a couple of serious questions remain.

Can valid universalizations be made about the "real-world" effects of a certain kind of human conduct—the intervention of one government in the affairs of another? Richman suggests that intervention is always, in fact, prohibitively dangerous. Intervention is always a catastrophe inspired by sinister "patrons" whose "interests" never coincide with yours or mine. I, on the other hand, make the rather bland suggestion that there are many kinds of governments; that many interests, sinister and otherwise, may be tied up with them; and that the risks to liberty that are associated with intervention vary with the nature and circumstances of intervention. The intervention of Stalin in postwar Europe, for instance, was much more dangerous to the interests of liberty than was the in-

tervention of the United States in post-war Europe.

If it is true, as Richman argues, that tyranny always "burns itself out," what are the implications of this fact? Does it imply that we should merely wait for tyranny to expire? Richman thinks we should—if the tyranny happens to be foreign! But tyranny can take hundreds of years to burn out; in the process, it may burn up millions of lives and threaten millions of others. At some time, perhaps, some other state could possibly do something to contain or extinguish a tyranny's fire.

But these are questions that Richman and I can safely leave to our readers' common sense. □

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back

Ivan Grozni

by Brett Rutherford

Ivan Grozni

Tyrant of the Oprichniks
 Little Father to the trembling serfs.
 Your murders pale, poor Ivan the Terrible,
 beside the deeds of a fat old man—
 a pensioned auto worker
 front porch grandpa in old Cleveland
 a beer and pretzel neighbor
 picnics and barbecues
 ball games on the radio
 nodding to sleep before the television.

He is another Ivan, *Ivan Grozni*,
 Ivan the Terrible
 lord of Treblinka
 counting the days to his
 Social Security check,
 his numbered entitlement—

As Ivan he numbered his subjects—
 gypsies and Jews and misfits,
 counted them by the hundred,
 gassed them by the thousand,
 bookkeeping entries at every
 ten thousand mark,
 medal from the Fuhrer
 for ever tenth
 of a million exterminated,
 numbers on a golden arch of death.

Gold watch retirement gift—
 good man on the assembly line,
 speedy with wrench and rivet—
 how many cars did he finish?
 A mere few thousand, maybe,
 nothing to match
 the nine hundred thousand
 he prodded in
 through the one way door.

He understood efficiency.
 Their slouching gait
 not fast enough,
 he whipped and prodded,
 maimed and mowed down
 the laggards and lame ones.
 (His fat hands picked out
 the defective bolts,
 dropped them to bin—
 never asked where
 they went—)

Tried for his crimes
 he rallies his wife and family,
 hires an attorney to fight
 this case of mistaken identity.
 He smiles at the battered old Jews
 who say they remember him,
 call him the Beast of Treblinka,
 waves to the courtroom audience
 and says in Hebrew—

I am innocent.

I am not Ivan the Terrible.

Yet who are these ghosts
 that crowd the air,
 clotting the room with accusation?
 Who are these legion whisperers,
 nine tenths of a million strong
 chanting like monks
 at a Tsar's interment
 singing like bells of monotonous iron
 one steeple truth in a landscape of lies:

Ivan . . . Ivan . . . Ivan Grozni.

Challenge

The Great Gulf in Libertarian Theory

by Loren E. Lomasky

Between the Real and the Ideal lies the uncharted territory where the incautious disappear without a trace, where the road to Utopia can lead, quite literally, *nowhere*. The way to a free society requires voyages of discovery.

Libertarians like to argue, most of all with one another. But that should not be allowed to obscure the fact that all libertarians—right, left, gradualist, abolitionist, whatever—agree on far more than they disagree. Extremes within the movement are considerably closer to one another than are, say, wings within the Democratic and Republican parties, *National Review* conservatives, or the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. Even anarchists and minimal statist project visions of an ideal libertarian society that differ only along the margins.

This may sound like the prologue to an invitation to a love-in, a plea that animosities be set aside so that, united, we can march foursquare toward the Truth. My intention is precisely the opposite. Rather, I shall maintain that there is a vast area of libertarian political theory that lies largely unexplored but that is of crucial relevance to libertarian practice.

Arguments abound concerning fine points of the precise shape of a fully libertarian society, yet little is heard concerning the far murkier question: what do libertarian principles imply here and now? That is, how ought libertarians act in the decidedly nonlibertarian societies in which we all, willy-nilly, find ourselves?

No, I'm not catatonic. I am aware of the tempestuous debates concerning strategy and tactics that punctuate all libertarian activities, especially political campaigns. But these are almost entirely limited to pragmatic worries, not fundamental principles of political

philosophy. Indeed, it is obliviousness to the need to develop adequate principles that is largely responsible for the intractability and silliness of so much of the wrangling.

Suppose that we have a tolerably clear picture of what a fully libertarian society would look like. What follows from this picture about how one ought to respond to illiberal practices and institutions in our actual society? One might reflexively presume that the elimination of any practice that would not be countenanced within the fully libertarian society is a step in the direction of complete liberty and thus ought to be promoted. This inference is invalid. It is to act as though a strict compliance theory (one that specifies principles incumbent upon persons in a generally just regime) can be mechanically extended to cover circumstances of only partial compliance (in which persons and institutions fall significantly short of full adherence to what is morally optimal).

The fallaciousness of the inference can be demonstrated by a simple example. Coercion is wrong. More precisely, in a system of perfect com-

pliance, no one coerces anyone else. Suppose that one person aggresses against someone else. May the aggressor be punished, either for retribution or to exact compensation? If one has a theory of strict compliance to go by, the answer is no. Punishment would produce a second coercive act while not punishing leaves the total at one coercive act.

The result is absurd, though that has not prevented some libertarians from embracing it. They have mistakenly believed that fidelity to the ideal standard of no coercion mandates that position.

Most of us subscribe to the wrongfulness of *initiating* coercion. The difference makes all the difference.

I emphasize *initiating* coercion because it underscores that different principles apply to the case in which an aggressive act has already taken place to those that apply when it has not. Implicit recognition is better than none at all, but it means that the libertarian theory of partial compliance has received nothing like the attention it merits. The predictable result has been ill-informed positions. Here are some examples:

1) It has recently been argued in these pages ("Scholarship as Leechcraft," March 1990) that libertarian scholars employed by state universities are moral parasites. Why? Because in a fully libertarian society no one would be taxed to support higher education.

2) Zoning codes should be summarily abolished. Why? Because in a libertarian society there would be no restrictions on nonaggressive use of one's property other than those stipulated through private contract.

3) Less governmental regulation is necessarily better than more. Even where a regulation is proposed to counter the ill effects of a previous governmental blunder (where repeal, however, is politically unfeasible), it is the duty of libertarians to oppose further regulation "on principle."

4) Taxation is theft. Ergo, any means of evading taxation are permissible even if the predictable effect is that other persons will be forced to pay more taxes.

We go around and around in the same circles, sure that it is the ignorance or venality of our foes that is the culprit, not a mutual lack of adequate theory.

5) Cooperative undertakings with nonlibertarians are wrong if they involve any compromise of one's libertarian principles. Those principles are, of course, those that would govern conduct in a fully libertarian society.

The list could easily be extended. The examples may seem to be directed toward "radicals" as the prime offenders. To some extent that is so; their furious devotion to "standing on principle" is too often based on an egregious confusion between the principle of strict compliance and the principle of partial compliance. But so-called moderates fare only a little better. While they have the intuitive good sense to realize that one is not bound to act as if the millennium had already dawned, they rarely bother to under-

take a justification of their stance on fundamental moral grounds. That's why the charge of "opportunism" tends to stick.

Internecine warfare within the libertarian movement is often as bitter as it is fruitless because the contending parties are heedless of the need to jog their thinking past strict compliance stereotypes. Around and around in the same circles we go, sure that it is the ignorance or venality of our foes that is the culprit, not a mutual lack of adequate theory. This is a plea for a halt to petty bickering, so that we can join in the more productive generation of a moral framework adequate to take us from here to there. Debates there will be, but they need to be conducted on the appropriate level.

Because the task is hardly begun, it would be premature to speculate on the form an adequately developed partial compliance theory will take. The movement has been graced with enough oracular pronouncements; it needs no additional ones from me. I will, however, close by briefly noting three factors of which any theory must be cognizant if it is to be at all plausible.

1) *Legitimate expectations.* Most people, even most libertarians, have undertaken action in the reasonable expectation that big government will not disappear overnight. The pensioner receiving Social Security checks, the farmer who is as cognizant of price support structures as he is of weather reports, even the businessman who has invested in a store served by public transportation have all directed their affairs in the way they have because of certain well-grounded beliefs concerning the continuance of some governmental activity. Even if the origination of the activity was grossly illegitimate, it does not follow that these expectations are bereft of moral weight. Some are, some are not, and it is the job of moral theory to provide criteria for differentiation. Put most simply, before the Post Office is shut down, letters already in the box must be delivered. Those who are harmed by the termination of an illegitimate governmental activity may be due compensation; it is the job of moral theory to tell us who must compen-

sate whom.

2) *Transition costs.* B might be a preferable state of affairs to the status quo, A, yet if the costs of getting to B are exorbitant, we may be obliged to move to B via an indirect route or instead choose the nonoptimal but less costly C. And when the decision to shift to B is made, the magnitude and distribution of transition costs must be ascertained so that those harmed by

Let us halt petty bickering so that we can join in the more productive generation of a moral framework adequate to take us from here to there.

the process can receive whatever compensation they are due. (When harm results from the frustration of legitimate expectations, this consideration merges with the previous one.) An example of a transition cost dilemma: it might have been a very bad idea for the state to have assumed the task of providing primary education. It does not follow that immediate public withdrawal from the educational arena is appropriate. Libertarian principles are not necessarily breached by someone who instead endorses the institution of a voucher scheme so as to mitigate the worst effects of state monopoly while simultaneously minimizing transition shocks.

3) *Judgments of second best.* Anything short of a regime of full freedom may be bad. But some regimes are worse than others. Bondage to the IRS may be a form of slavery, but it is not the slavery of the Gulag. A recital of international bad guys in which the United States and Israel rank as high or higher than, say, Iran or Burma is too pure for this sullied world. Classification into "the best" and "all the rest" is inadequate because sometimes the best is not attainable. Theory must provide criteria for making judgments of degree, and libertarians must reconcile themselves to the fact that, in unfortunate circumstances, what morality may require is, above all, avoidance of the worst. □

Essay

The "Official Truth" and the Death of Thought

by Karl Hess

The rationale for government education was that it should transform local children into national citizens. Unfortunately, these "national citizens" are not molded according to a liberal ideal; they are servile to a horrifying degree.

In a pottery store, just the other day, I overheard an example of the result of the government's curriculum. Two women, looking at large jars, held the following dialogue:

"Here's a cookie jar."

"But here's a jar that looks even better to me."

"Yeah, but it doesn't say 'Cookies.'"

"Oh, then it probably isn't a cookie jar."

Those two women had come to accept "official truth." They looked for labels and were unimpressed by function. They apparently did not see empty containers into which just about anything could be put. They saw designations. If one of the jars had been marked "Condoms," I'll bet they would have agonized over whether they should continue squirreling their supply away in an unofficial drawer rather than having an official container.

They are products of government schools that carefully and purposefully inculcate "official truth" rather than encourage critical thinking. Horace Mann's pernicious prescription for government education was that it should transform local children into national citizens. That it has done, generation after generation.

Another horrifying example of the "official truth" virus, from another overheard conversation, this one at a public library. Two women, again.

"My son is really interested in

science."

"Oh, that's wonderful. We sure need scientists."

"Well, I bet he's gonna be one. Why he knows the name of every missile that we have and he's still only in grade school."

Of course, the kid *could* turn out to be a scientist. At the moment, however, he's just another collector of official truths, not much more exciting than the kid who knows the batting average of many Big League baseball players but who has yet to play in a game.

A regard for official truth can establish mindsets that may be ineradicable. Think of some clichés that should scare us to death but which have become so acceptable that they are, holy cow, *actually* clichés, with all the cultural power that implies:

"I read it in the paper. It must be true."

"They couldn't say that if it wasn't true."

"Well, they ought to know what they're doing, that's why we elected (or pay) them."

"Who am I to say they're wrong?"

"Why don't they teach kids to be

good, the way they taught us?"

"Kids learn best when they sit in rows and keep their mouths shut."

"The most important part of school is the socialization that kids get."

"The most important thing that kids need in schools is the basics, the alphabet, the multiplication table, respect for authority."

If, in elementary school, children are taught the four formal Rs, (Read-in', 'Ritin', 'Rithmetic—and Respect) they go into middle and then high schools thoroughly primed to do exactly what we may fear they will do: pay attention to test scores and simply ignore refinement of the mind. Which is, of course, exactly what the educational bureaucrats want. The educators' popularity with parents and legislators is tied to raising the test score average of pupils in their jurisdiction.

Perhaps some rare bird among them will attempt to do this by having teachers who will encourage better thinking. Most will do the bureaucratically obvious thing: they will support teachers who will *teach students how to take tests*. Successful test takers might be intelligent. But who knows? The

purely mechanistic techniques of test taking are the equivalent of things that can be mastered by a lively angle worm, literally. Worms can be taught to wiggle their ways through mazes. So can the dullest child be taught how to take true or false tests efficiently enough to wiggle by.

Test scores are another example of official truth. Where one good essay question might reveal a glittering or a glum intelligence, the multiple choice tests reveal mainly test-taking facility—and yet another bureaucratically desirable way of quantifying results that will look good in the headlines regardless of what they do to young heads. But test scores have become the official truths by which government education is judged.

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Wonderfully, there are a number of young teachers and a few fractious older ones who are trying to buck the tide of official truth and "basic education" and to move toward the encouragement of thinking.

One attractive program is that of the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children at Montclair State College, Montclair, N.J. Beginning with the earliest elementary school grades and continuing into high school, IAPC material is based on the premise that a gang of kids in a classroom should be considered "a community of inquiry," as the Institute's director Dr. Matthew Lipman puts it.

Each of the segments of IAPC material consists of a fictional story of about 90 pages and a huge teacher's manual. The story involves children of the age to which the segment is being presented. The manual offers, literally,

hundreds of questions to get the kids thinking about the story and the implications of its every paragraph.

By the end of the first page of the segment on ethics, for grades 7-9, the discussion involves killing and the differences between killing animals and killing people. In the segment on reasoning in social studies, the students actually are encouraged to discuss the fact that they are being *forced* to be at school.

My favorite is a segment entitled *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery*, for grades 5-6. The hero's name contains an anagram of "Aristotle" and is for grades where a lot of government-trained students still don't even know how to read effectively, much less think effectively.

On the first page of the story, poor Harry is caught daydreaming when his teacher asks "What is it that has a long tail, and revolves around the sun every 77 years?" Harry, flustered, remembers that the teacher has recently told them that "all planets revolve around the sun." He tries "a planet" as an answer and is incorrect.

Later on, on page two, he's still thinking about the correct answer, Halley's Comet, but he's really *thinking* about it and not just trying to remember it. What a great difference!

"So there are things that revolve around the sun that aren't planets," Harry said to himself. "All planets revolve around the sun, but not everything that revolves around the sun is a planet." And then Harry had an idea. "A sentence can't be reversed. If you put the last part of the sentence first, it'll no longer be true. For example, take the sentence 'All oaks are trees.' If you turn that around, it becomes 'All trees are oaks,' but that's false."

Harry is so fascinated by his discovery (the kid has actually *learned* something) that he goes on to explore it with his classmates. By the end of the story, after many terrific, upbeat arguments and discussions of the sort that most kids revel in, Harry's major discovery is made and exalted. It's the syllogism.

In a recent issue of *Technology Review*, the magazine of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, it was proposed that even mathematics could

be approached by this discovery route rather than through the mind-numbing rote process that leaves most students absolutely convinced that math is a bore and never will be of use to them.

The MIT proposal was that children should discover the utility of math and the principles of math in about the same way that many mathematicians have and do. They should solve problems related to their own lives. The axioms of geometry, for instance, should be discoveries, the way they were for Euclid, and not dictates from the teacher.

Teachers who are used to doing exactly what they were taught to do (over and over and over again) naturally detest an idea in which the students so fully and energetically are encouraged to participate. Order in the classroom might be disrupted by questions. And how are children to know "what's right" if the teacher doesn't tell them?

Worst of all, in the several hundred schools where IAPC material is in use in at least one or two classrooms, there is an obvious problem with timed, multiple-choice tests, the bureaucratic standard across the land. Children who are involved with the IAPC material generally don't do well on such tests. They try to think about the question and they try to think about the answer and they are slowed down by questions in which several of the choices could be proper given this or that interpretation. Have you ever seen a multiple-choice question where you didn't want to argue about either the way it's framed or the way you expect someone wants it answered?

On essay questions, however, the IAPC kids are likely to go right off the upper scale. They are intelligent learners, not rote robots.

It is conventional wisdom to say that the great intellectual battles are won or lost in the colleges. And surely there is good reason to say that.

But colleges do not provide the foundations. "Higher education" has its humble beginnings in the elementary schools. Might it not be that if children were nourished on logic and inquiry back where the academic stream begins, it would be tougher to sell them foolish nostrums and political pies-in-the-sky? □

Exposé

A Closer Look At Walter Williams

by Gary S. Meade

When Libertarian Party members talk about a presidential candidate for 1992, the name most frequently heard is Walter Williams. Is Williams a Moses poised to lead libertarians from the wilderness of miniscule vote totals?

A number of Libertarians are attempting to woo as a 1992 presidential candidate black economist Walter Williams. Williams has remained non-committal at best, requiring a series of necessary but not sufficient conditions, rather after the fashion of conservatives who reacted to Gorbachev's overtures by saying they would believe in the seriousness of *glasnost* if the Russkies would publish *Dr Zhivago*—and, when they did so, required that they knock down the Berlin Wall, which they also did. Williams more modestly required, *inter alia*, that the LP improve its dowry to mere multiples of its voter registration and campaign funding. Sounds a bit like Gene Burns—remember him?

Of Mr Williams it should be said that, to the extent that his views are libertarian—and responsibly expressed—it is good that they be widely aired in his newspaper column. So let's take a look at seven of his weekly columns from May 17 to October 26, 1989—about a third of his output during that period.

May 24: "If I had a minor child who got an abortion, the clinic that did it, the judge who allowed it, and the lawyer who represented her would be in a world of trouble and so would I." Well, it's not strictly illibertarian to oppose abortions for minors, even if the pregnancy was due to rape or incest or both. Even the flamboyant vigilantism is more irresponsible than illibertarian. Going on, Williams tells us, "a father suspected his son of having drugs in his bedroom. So he asked the police to

search the room. [This must be the "traditional value" of family loyalty.] Drugs were found. The kid got a lawyer and sued for illegal search and seizure. That a lawyer would take the case and a judge would listen is preposterous." What comment could betray greater antipathy to libertarian ideals, save perhaps applauding a father for turning a son in for draft evasion? Williams continues: "Lawyers have made it difficult for school principals to search students' lockers without a warrant. Is it any wonder drugs have gotten such a foothold in our society?" Taking part in the drug hysteria will help make the LP comfortably mainstream, as will the factual claim, which is misleading at best: according to the Supreme Court, schools may search students' desks and lockers without federal let or hindrance.

July 26: Williams demurely opposes an anti-flag burning amendment, but ends with this star-spangled macho flash: "Oh, by the way, anyone looking to desecrate Old Glory in front of my house is advised to first kiss his loved ones goodbye." Why have a law when a private lynch mob is so much

more efficient?

June 7: Williams complains that "experts" (read: the demon liberals) "whimper that longer sentences can't be given because of prison overcrowding. Here's my solution." What does he suggest—abolishing victimless crime laws? No: exile criminals to Pacific island penal colonies "with death as the penalty for escape." Good. That'll make room for all those drug dealers.

October 26: "Out of every 1,000 major felonies, how many perpetrators go to jail [?]. . . 17. In 1983, 55,000 criminals were set free on legal technicalities." Question: how many of the 55,000 crimes had victims? And does Mr Williams really expect us to believe that a persnickety concern for Constitutional rights of suspects results in the low 1.7% incarceration rate for major felonies? The vast, vast majority of perpetrators are never apprehended in the first place. Has it never occurred to him that the low rate may be due to a combination of police incompetence and perverse police priorities, spending money busting hookers and jaywalkers? Do we really need more attacks on the Bill of Rights and more

bad logic to boot?

October 19: A column called "It's Unnatural": another swipe at the "experts" (and "liberal media and dishonest intellectuals"), whom Williams says "called for acceptance of aberrant behavior as 'alternative life styles.'" What is he calling for here? Souped-up victimless crime laws? We know that 'alternative life style' is a right-wing code phrase for any kind of sex and drugs that conservatives denounce and use themselves. We should ask Mr Williams what he thought of the alternative life styles of conservatives Roy Cohn, Terry Dolan, ex-congressman Robert Bauman, would-be Supreme Court Justice G. Harrold Carswell, lobbyist Craig Spence (who gave midnight White House tours to male prostitutes), and others too litigious to mention.

May 17: More discussion of the irresistibly attractive subject of the unnatural (as Freud said, the repressed

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always returns, which is why conservatives are obsessed with sex and drugs): "Isn't it unnatural for teenagers [to be] engaging in sex?" I don't know about Mr Williams, but I was 20 before I stopped being a teenager. Plenty of people are married by that age, and the legal age for marriage is lowest in those bastions of traditional values, Southern states. The minimum age in Alabama is 14, and Georgia allows marriage at any age, if the lady of the household-to-be is already in the family way.

July 5: Williams exults that "Black conservatives['] . . . numbers are on the

upswing. . . . The liberal philosophy that criticized chaste sex mores had its most devastating impact on blacks. Having given up traditional values, where black teen illegitimacy was once lower than whites (1918) . . . today's black illegitimacy is 55 percent." For an *economist* to blame the civil liberties side of liberal philosophy rather than its economic side—which *paid* people to churn out illegitimate children—is context-dropping to the point of surrealism. Moreover, had more blacks practiced homosexuality or employed condoms—both illegal under "traditional values"—there would be a lower black illegitimacy rate. Williams goes on to claim "liberals blessed the nation with widespread drug usage. . . . Drugs [have] had their worst effect on blacks, turning youths into rap-talking zombies. . . ." Aside from the peculiar notion that it is drugs, not people, that are the active agents in this equation, Williams does not say whether his claim is true of *middle class* black youths—who would be a much larger fraction of black youths in the absence of the welfare programs Williams avoids mentioning. He concludes: "Blacks cannot depend on politicians. They must protect their own neighborhoods, even if that means using violence to clean up drug corners and crackhouses. They must show up on school premises to mete out instant justice to [alleged!] miscreants. 'Williams,' you say, 'that sounds like vigilantism.' Well, I say: 'What do you do when established legal authorities refuse to do their job—just sit and take it? And for how long?'"

Lynch mobs—if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, eh, Walter?

Perhaps it is now easier to understand why his column is syndicated by the ultra-right-wing Heritage Foundation (whose small number of other columnists includes Mr Williams's personal friend, Ed Meese).

If we were to dig back more than half a year, we would find much more of the same in Williams's writing. What is interesting is that Williams has been consistently purveying columns ranging from the embarrassing, to the sloppy or dishonest, to the outrageously illibertarian, even while stringing along Libertarians with the prospect of

a semi-demi-celebrity presidential candidate in 1992. Why might he do that? It opens for him a lucrative, if temporary, side-market of speaking engagements, at up to \$3,000 a crack. (Now here's a form of crack we can oppose.)

Unlike conservatives, libertarians don't need to prove we're not racist by sponsoring Archie Bunker in blackface.

To modify an old joke: Why do libertarians have money? So people will talk to them. This explains at a stroke (a) why people talk to libertarians at all; and (b) why they talk to libertarians so little. There is a market niche for a full-time right-wing black economist. There is a market for two of them, in fact, Thomas Sowell being the other one. There is no market niche for a full-time libertarian black economist.

Why? Because (a) we don't have the money, and (b) unlike conservatives, we don't need to prove we're not racist by sponsoring Archie Bunker in blackface. Re-read the quotes above and see if Archie would have any trouble with the content (or style) of Williams's expressions. After all, why do people pay any attention to Williams? Because of his pathbreaking economic and social insights? Because of his coruscating wit? Of course not. It's because of his skin color. If he were white, editors would be embarrassed to print his opinions (such as that black people are bad off because of their lax morals); he would just be another one of many second rate economists. Though a critic of affirmative action, he is one of its biggest beneficiaries.

Since Walter Williams and his skin game have a sinecure on the Right, the smart money is on the side of Mr Williams leaving the Libertarian bride at the altar in '92—seduced, swindled, and abandoned. Why beg for this? Life is short, and money is expensive. It's the Right that desperately needs the pretense of racial tolerance. It isn't us.

Or is it? □

Response

In Defense of Williams

by Jim McClarin

Gary S. Meade provides a fine and spirited rebuke of Walter E. Williams for espousing less-than-libertarian sentiments in his syndicated column—and a shocking eye-opener for the uncritical “draft Williams” folks within the Libertarian Party.

Seen in another light, however, Meade’s treatment of Williams is a useful example of why the Libertarian Party has so much trouble attaining any political relevance (i.e. size and power); keepers of the flame devote most of their energy to driving away all who are impure in heart and soul, even to the point of considerable blood-letting among themselves. (I fall into this sin all too frequently myself.)

To Meade’s objections over Williams’s departures from libertarianism could be added Williams’ internal inconsistency, since the columnist has on other occasions “said the right thing” on many of the issues raised by Meade (for instance, his December, 1989 column calling for drug decriminalization, and his August 1986 decrying proposed laws against abortion). Also, a major stumbling block not addressed by Meade is Williams’s rather-too-bellucose foreign policy.

But Meade and other Libertarians should engage the esteemed columnist/economist on these important philosophic points with a greater measure of friendliness, respect and self-confidence. After all, Williams is not the foe he would appear in Meade’s telling of it—more likely a valuable asset.

Consider that here is a man whose writing, even by Meade’s figuring, is at least two-thirds libertarian, who has been approached concerning (but who declined) several cabinet-level positions, and whose success at spreading

the ideas of liberty easily surpasses that of the entire Libertarian Party. (Williams’s weekly column has a circulation of about 4.5 million, and he elicits phenomenal reader response.)

Williams runs the risk of alienating a portion of his large readership by linking himself too closely with the Libertarian Party, which I know from experience as head of the Walter Williams Boosters organization. His willingness to travel and speak to Libertarian conventions must indicate a sincere appreciation of and willingness to help the Libertarian Party grow and prosper, unless, of course, Meade is correct that he’s only in it for the money. But why on earth Williams neglected to charge the Libertarian Party of Vermont for his April 7, 1990 appearance at their convention is hard to explain under Meade’s theory. (\$3,000 a crack indeed!)

But assume Meade is correct—that Williams sees libertarians as a good, if temporary, revenue source. Libertarians are supposed to understand the law of contract and the “mutual advantage” theory of market exchange. In the hands of a qualified promoter Williams is a very “hot property” because of his large and wildly enthusiastic readership, and Libertarians should be able to draw in many new people with aggressive outreach efforts when they land Williams as a speaker. But if Libertarian event organizers don’t believe they can recoup Williams’s expense and admissions or publicity they probably won’t buy Williams product, and Meade needn’t become overwrought at the prospect.

Another of Meade’s ideas crumbles under inspection: His attempt to cast Walter Williams in the Gene Burns role. Burns announced his candidacy

and campaigned energetically for the nomination in 1983, only to decide at the last moment that troop strength was too low to adequately engage the enemy. (In Burns’s defense, he is presently hard at work building the party in New England.) But Williams has at best admitted to “considering it” in response to Libertarian ticket-builders, and has recommended that the party continue to search elsewhere.

Rather than Williams “stringing along Libertarians” by not absolutely denying any interest in running, Meade might consider a less inimical, less duplicitous interpretation. That thread of hope may be providing much-needed motivation for the party to hurry up and make something of itself so as to be able to interest any number of potential candidates. (A battle among several noteworthies, even absent Williams, would swell attendance at the Chicago convention and attract serious media coverage.)

Meade points out none too kindly that without his blackness Williams would be nothing, and that the Liber-

Meade and other Libertarians should engage the esteemed columnist/economist on important philosophic points with a greater measure of friendliness, respect and self-confidence. Williams is a man whose writing is at least two-thirds libertarian . . .

tarian Party doesn’t need Williams for his color. While Williams himself might good-naturedly attest to the truth of this (though the media in heavily black Chicago may not), his gift and his resultant popularity with his readers is a reality that could be rather easily translated into votes, and the Libertarian Party needs votes! I have suggested privately (and now publicly) to Meade and other Libertarians that they join in the search for other high-profile candidates for the nomination rather than lashing at every germinal attempt to draft an

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Advice

A Management Consultant Looks at Libertarian Politics

by Ronald E. Merrill

When your organization scampers off in every direction, when it never turns a profit, never gains new support, and never reaches its stated goals—it needs help. Professional help.

It seemed familiar, somehow. Reading the post-election analyses of the performance of the Libertarian Party, I had a sense of *deja vu*. I'd seen it all before—oh, sure, after the 1984 election, and other elections before that—but also . . . somewhere else . . . in another context . . . yes . . . Consulting.

I do (among other things) management consulting for high-tech businesses. Dozens of ingenious inventors have enthusiastically explained to me how their idea was going to change the world. Unfortunately, many of them are a bit weak on management skills. The problems they bring to me fall into a pattern.

The Libertarian Party, another start-up full of enthusiastic people with new ideas, fits that pattern. So maybe it would be profitable to consider Libertarian politics from the perspective of a management consultant.

A classic symptom of an innovator in trouble is obsession with the product. The inventor grabs you by the lapel, locks the door behind you, and demonstrates all the neat features of his widget—every last one of them. He proves to you that it does twice as much as the competition, costs half as much, and is edible in case of emergency. If you try gently to lead the conversation toward business topics—sales targets, production facilities, cash flow, making payroll next Friday, things like that—his eyes glaze over.

Libertarian political activists, like so many inventors, have their eyes turned inward. Their product—

libertarian policies—is their obsession. And they just can't understand why they're not making progress. Look at the election analyses. "Our product [policies] should be beating the competition hands down. Why won't customers [voters] buy it? What's *wrong* with them, anyway?"

The first turning point comes when one realizes that just possibly the problem isn't what's wrong with them. As one of my entrepreneur clients wryly put it, "If I'm so smart, why ain't I rich?" The client who can reach this point is ready to be introduced to a change in perspective: What's in it for the customer?

You don't have a business until you rid yourself of the attitude that "the customer *ought* to buy my product because it's so good." And you don't have a political party until you rid yourself of the attitude that "the voter *ought* to elect me because my policies are right." Castigating your customers as immoral, illogical, ignorant, or stupid gets you nowhere (even though you may be quite correct in your evaluation).

It is essential to take your market seriously and consider how to appeal

to it. Your vision of what your customers *ought* to be like is irrelevant. The only thing that matters is what they *are* like. The first step to success is to look, really look, at your customers. Get some facts. Develop an understanding of their likes and dislikes, their opinions and prejudices and motives. In short, do market research.

If you want to know why Libertarians keep getting clobbered by the major parties, just compare their political analysts. Libertarian analysts of the 1988 election talked about such subtle and sophisticated factors as whether national TV ads would help and how third parties traditionally do poorly in the United States. The mainstream experts are professionals who operate at an entirely different level: How do the demographic characteristics of voters differ from those of non-voters? What are the most important issues for baby-boom voters, and how do they differ across geographical zones? Which classes of voters are most influenced by endorsements? They use polls, interviews, focus groups—all the professional market research tools—to *understand their market*.

Another classic mistake of innova-

tors is lack of market focus. As soon as you start taking the market seriously, you learn something very important about it: *You can't sell your product to everyone..* In fact, a small, new organization—whether a business or a political party—has very limited resources and has only one sensible strategy: Pick the most favorable market segment and sell to them only. If you try selling everybody, your efforts will be diffused and you will sell nobody.

To be fair, the Libertarian Party has long debated the idea of market segmentation. Unfortunately, such analysis as has been done has been superficial, leading to unfocused, opportunistic marketing. Any electoral group that has some sort of tiff with the State is considered fair game: tax protesters, or prostitutes, or marijuana smokers, or New Left activists, even dissident Democrats. In case anybody might have been missed, how about some TV ads broadcast to the population at large?

Any new business has to learn to identify its best customer class and concentrate on them. This is often painful, as seemingly lucrative targets of opportunity must be ignored. But a new venture must be exclusive, not inclusive, in its marketing.

Then there is failure to develop a coherent market strategy—and stick to it. Just what do we want to accomplish, anyway? Many new businesses are confused and ambivalent about their market goals. Do they want rapid sales growth? Or perhaps more moderate revenues but in a high-profit segment? I see the same management fibrillation in Libertarian politics. The normal purpose of a political party is to win elections. Unfortunately, the LP hasn't shown much talent for executing this basic strategy. So many Libertarian activists have decided that the justification for the party's existence is that it "educates voters."

This is exactly the market-contemptuous rationalization that has ruined many start-up businesses. How many times have I heard an entrepreneur tell me that "we have to educate our customers" so they'll learn to appreciate the product? Almost invariably, this "education" is something you do to people, not something you do for them. But you don't get sales—or votes—by doing things *to* people.

Again, *what's in it for the customer?* It's been estimated that a majority of American voters are net recipients from government. So, we are going to educate them in Austrian economics, and then they will cheerfully renounce their subsidies, bureaucratic jobs, and government-enforced privileges. Maybe—but that's what's known in the trade as a "tough sale."

Ask not what your customer can do for you; ask what you can do for your customer. Business success begins when you start asking some basic and, I fear, humble questions. Who are my best customer prospects? What do they want? How can I give it to them?

The purpose of a political party is to serve the people who vote for it. Party leaders, like entrepreneurs, have their own motivations—to acquire power, to do good, to achieve satisfaction, or just to get a job. But a party, like a business, can survive and grow only to the extent that it serves its constituency.

The major parties have at least a dim understanding of this principle. Constituent service is the invisible underpinning of their power. From all levels of government a continuous stream of favors flows down to Democratic and Republican voters: grants and subsidies and pork-barrel construction projects, "voluntary import restrictions" and competitor-killing regulations, expedited zoning variances and construction permits, and a thousand other big or little services. The media may talk about the campaign "issues," but many if not most voters have very tangible reasons to choose their congressmen or city council members.

Obviously the Libertarian Party cannot compete in the purveying of government coercion. But that's OK; even if it were possible, it's bad strategy for a startup to go head-to-head with the dominant firms in the industry.

Instead, the party should find a market niche—identify an unfilled customer need, and fill it. We are looking for a voter group that needs freedom, of course. But that's not all. We want to aim at customers who have long-term loyalty—not fickle types who don't have a strong need for our product and can be easily seduced by competitors' salesmen. Like any other outfit with an

innovative product, we should look for "early adopters"—people who are receptive to new ideas and new products. If possible, we'd like to find customers who are even pre-disposed to like our product. And we should look for dissatisfied customers of competing firms.

To my mind—and I concede that I'm prejudiced—the most promising market for the Libertarian Party is entrepreneurs and other self-employed people. For them the State is mostly the problem, not the solution. And their desire for freedom is *broad-based*; it doesn't just result from a single-issue beef with the government. They are hurt by taxes, regulations, forced unionization, and many other statist activities. These problems of the independent businessman have existed for years, are getting worse, and are not

You don't have a business until you rid yourself of the attitude that "the customer ought to buy my product because it's so good." And you don't have a political party until you rid yourself of the attitude that "the voter ought to elect me because my policies are right."

going away. Entrepreneurial types tend to be innovative and receptive to change. And, finally, many are very dissatisfied with the major parties. The Democratic and Republican parties *cannot* serve small business without mortally wounding their core constituencies—labor unions and big business, respectively.

Here is a market that is strong, growing, and likely to be receptive. No doubt other possibilities can be identified, but whatever niche the Party may choose, it should develop a clear brand image designed to appeal to the target market. This is what the ad industry calls a "unique selling proposition."

Developing a consistent market strategy has been very difficult for the Libertarian Party because of the fundamentally schizoid character of the movement it represents. Again, this is a

familiar problem with start-up management teams. When one partner has a fundamentally different value system from another, the business is paralyzed.

The libertarian movement is a blend of two immiscible streams. One consists of people who see freedom as a moral issue; the other of people for whom tolerance is the essence of political wisdom. The Party can sell one proposition, or it can sell the other; it cannot sell both. History suggests that the former will do better in the market, but in any case the LP will go nowhere until its supporters firmly and permanently come down on one side or the other.

A major strand in libertarian theory is the "anarcho-capitalist" school, which holds that governments can and should be profit-making businesses. Let's start by building a Libertarian Party that is a profit-making business.

The Party slogan—"the party of principle"—expresses the idea of freedom as a *moral* issue. It could be made into a very strong selling point. Polls indicate that many voters are fed up with the "flexibility" and "pragmatism" of major-party politicians. They hunger for politicians who can be counted on to stick to their principles.

Recently in California a man went berserk and shot several schoolchildren with a semi-automatic rifle. Immediately, of course, relentless media pressure developed for a ban on "assault weapons." All sorts of local, state, and national politicians quickly got on the bandwagon—including many whom gun owners thought they could count on. These voters might be receptive to a party which told them, "You can count on us to oppose gun controls—even when that opposition is unpopular."

Of course, as with any business, it's not sufficient to make promises. If you want to keep on selling to the same customers, you must follow through—you must produce. If an LP candidate is elected, he or she will become subject to the same pressures that deform

Republican and Democratic consciences. The party will quickly lose its distinctive identity and advantage unless mechanisms are put in place to discipline the politicians it runs. The time may come when it is necessary to expel from the party a successful vote-getter, one of only a few elected officials from the LP, and one of the party's senior members for, say, waffling under media pressure. It won't be easy.

The next step is to develop the product—and put service to the customer first. In reading the election post-mortems by Libertarian Party figures, I was struck by their prevailing attitude, so similar to what I've seen in unsuccessful entrepreneurs. The mind-set is, what will the voters (customers) do for me? What will they do for the Party? As I've mentioned above, this has it backwards.

For instance: There is an expectation that supporters of libertarian ideals ought to write letters to the editor of newspapers and so on, to support the positions or issues of the Party. That ain't the way you do business if you want to succeed, folks. Here's what the Party should do instead. Develop a stable of libertarian writers who will write letters to the editor (or other literature) for Party members who need support when they're getting screwed by the State. Basic principle: It's not up to Party members to do things for the Party; it's up to the Party to do things for its constituents.

We have a potential market of people who are more or less continually under assault by the State, and who don't have the time, the skills, or the organization to fight back effectively. The Party has many services to offer them. Provide not only writers but speakers. Supply people who know how to make a grievance into news and get it on local television. Locate and unify other people who have the same problem. Provide support for lawsuits in certain cases. Support a stable of lobbyists. Develop an early-warning system for upcoming government atrocities.

Services like these could make Libertarian Party membership a highly desirable status—one for which many people would be willing to pay. And that leads to the subject of *making a profit*. Many inventors are so obsessed with

getting their widgets perfected and produced that they pay little attention to making money. They rely on "angels"—investors who will keep pouring in money to get the project to the next stage. Success can't come until you start thinking about how to sell something—sell something *now*—and make a profit in the process.

A major strand in libertarian theory is the "anarcho-capitalist" school, which holds that governments can and should be profit-making businesses. Well, if we want that to be taken seriously, let's start by building a Libertarian Party that is a profit-making business. Instead of begging for contributions, or relying on cash infusions from deep-pocketed enthusiasts, let's recruit dues-paying members and provide them with services in return. And let's make money in this business. Of course we won't call it a "profit"; we'll call it a "surplus" and plow it back into expansion.

Would the Libertarian Party win elections with this kind of management approach? More than it's winning now.

Would the voters be educated by this approach? Yes indeed, and far more effectively than by our running forlorn-hope presidential campaigns. We wouldn't be trying to "educate" the customer—teaching him, "for his own good," things he doesn't want to know. And that's why he'll learn.

Would libertarians make political progress with this approach? You're damned well told we would. All the sterile debates on "Libertarian Party vs. Libertarian Republicans" would evaporate. Libertarian leaders would be exercising influence, even if not elected, and would be relieved from riding the rubber-chicken circuit. Rank and file members would be producing results, not releasing balloons at conventions and going door-to-door with bumper stickers.

Sometimes—not always, probably not often—we might win elections. Sometimes, not in every case, we'd influence major-party politicians to move to accomplish our goals. And always, we'd be making progress—slowing and eventually reversing the trend toward the Leviathan State.

Will the Libertarian Party do all this? Of course not. Clients never take good advice. □

Travel

Encounter in Mbabane

by George M. Hollenback

Politics is well-known for setting up loyalties based on "us" versus "them." But sometimes political discussion broadens the realm of the "us" to include new and wonderful people.

It was late afternoon when Mziwonke Pro Jack joined me in the lobby of the Royal Swazi Sun. Pretty soon it would be dark—August is winter time in southern Africa—and the hotel's casino and bars would start getting busy. We ordered snacks and soft drinks, then sat back and

talked. Pro is an intense looking young black man, short and wiry, with a high forehead and a thin beard edging his jaw. He doesn't care to be identified by tribe or political affiliation; he is simply a "black South African" who knows three of the tribal languages and who is part of a "democratic movement."

"I spent seven years on Robben Island," he said. I looked up, surprised. I knew that Pro was a radical, but I wasn't prepared for that revelation. "The authorities were so stupid," he said shaking his head. "They sent me to prison on a sabotage charge, but I didn't do it. I knew who did, though," I waited for him to go on, but he was distracted by several people walking by. He glanced at them, then quickly looked the other way as if to avoid notice. "Those men were policemen," he whispered tensely, staring at the floor.

I know that he meant South African security police even though we were in Swaziland. He rambled on about the telltale details that gave the plainclothesmen away. If dope dealers can spot narcs, I guess political radicals can spot security police. "But Pro, are you absolutely sure? Did you rec-

ognize anyone?"

"Yes, yes. I know that one. He's from Cape Town." Pro regained his composure, sat back in his chair, and waved the incident away with his hand. "They are of no concern to me," he said, and we resumed our conversation.

The setting for this little drama was the 4th World Conference of Libertarian International, held in Swaziland's capital city of Mbabane. Pro Jack and several of his friends from Cape Town were invited to participate in an attempt to interest black radicals in the libertarian reform proposals of Leon Louw and Frances Kendall's *South Africa: the Solution* (later published in the US as *After Apartheid: the Solution for South Africa*). One of the "radicals" was a pretty, long-haired young lady whose perpetual smile was a welcome contrast to Pro's somber and cynical demeanor. My attention was first drawn to their little group when Pro spoke up during one of the many lively exchanges that took place at the end of each presentation. "We have to pay taxes," he said, "and yet we aren't allowed to vote. We don't have a say in how our money is

spent." (Don't all American schoolchildren learn about "taxation without representation"?)

During another presentation, given by Marc Swanepoel and David Maphumulo of the South African Free Market Foundation, Marc mentioned in passing something called the "Freedom Charter." This document, penned sometime in the 1950s, is a kind of black African "Declaration of Independence" that expresses their desire for a more just political order. Marc, the typical free-market economist, disparaged some of the leftist elements of the Charter: "Parts of it are nonsensical," he said. "It's like wanting to pass a law saying that it will rain every Tuesday." Pro took him to task. During the sparring between the two, someone suggested the Charter be read if a copy could be found. Someone produced a copy and handed it to Marc, who proceeded to read it from the stage.

Much of the Charter is devoted to affirmations of fair and equal treatment for all. The audience was nodding in agreement as was Marc himself. But when he came to the parts about "free this" and "govern-

ment-provided *that*," there were moans and low whistles from the libertarians. "This is what I was referring to," said Marc. "I can't go along with it here. But the rest is fine. And I would like to withdraw my characterization of the Charter as 'nonsensical.'"

"That's OK," said Pro, leaning back in his seat and waving the apology aside with his hand. "I believe in free speech."

The Charter became such a hot topic that a special session was ar-

As I was walking up Claim Street, I heard startlingly loud gunshots that were uncomfortably near—and took cover in the entrance of a highrise. South African police, in an unmarked car, had fired shots into the back of a suspect's pickup just as they were passing me.

ranged to pursue the subject in greater detail. The speaker, Dr Frank Vorhies, was a young professor of business economics at the University of Witwatersrand. He presented a case for interpreting the Charter from a libertarian perspective. "For example," he said, "the Freedom Charter talks about the mineral wealth of the land belonging to 'the people.' At present, the government of South Africa owns all mineral rights. How about creating negotiable shares in mineral rights and then distributing these shares among 'the people'? Then everyone would be free to buy, sell, or trade his shares as he sees fit."

Pro's leftist background came to the fore again when he questioned another economist, Dr Steve Pejovich, who directs the Center for Free Enterprise at Texas A&M University. Pejovich, a big, bearded man with a booming voice and an accent that gives away his Yugoslavian background, had just finished a presentation laced with economic arcana. "Somebody I know who went to Moscow one time said that you could buy

a fur coat there very cheap, much cheaper than over here," said Pro. "Why are they so cheap over there and so expensive over here?"

Pejovich patiently explained the intricacies of international trade: "The Russians need hard currency from other countries in order to buy things from those other countries. The ruble is used only in the Soviet Union. It's not traded on currency exchanges. So in order to get their hard currency, they open tourist shops and let foreigners buy Russian goods very cheaply with foreign currency. The average Russian isn't able to get those fur coats. Also, if you ever go to the Soviet Union, do this: Stand in front of some shop before it opens, right by the door. Pretty soon you'll have a whole line of people standing behind you. They think you're going to buy something. They have no idea what it is, but they want some too—while it lasts."

During one of the breaks between presentations, I saw the young lady from Pro's group engaged in an animated conversation with Bruce Evoy, a Libertarian International staffer. "I never knew such an organization as this existed," she was saying with undisguised enthusiasm. Her name was Ncunyiswa Agatha Hans and she worked at the Legal Resources Centre in Cape Town. "Ncunyiswa" is a Xhosa name, pronounced with those tongue clicks characteristic of certain southern African languages. It was beyond my mastery. She wanted to keep up with all the new friends she had made at the conference, so we exchanged addresses and ended up corresponding with each other in the following months.

Apartheid vs Freedom

The issues of sanctions and disinvestment inevitably arose during the proceedings. One South African speaker remarked that American businesses for the most part implemented racially enlightened policies not likely to be pursued by the other companies which bought them out when they left.

Aspects of apartheid largely unknown to the American public were also discussed. Apartheid is more than just government imposed segregation based on race; it is also a suffocating bureaucracy that interferes with black

economic development. In their book, Louw and Kendall use the example of a black person and a white person who both want to open a fish and chips shop. All the white person has to do is obtain a few basic licenses and permits and go into business. The black person, however, has to obtain considerably more licenses and permits, having to work his way through multiple layers of bureaucracy. At any step along the way, a particular license or permit may be denied on bureaucratic whim—even if the applicant has already spent thousands of rand trying to get his business started.

Many blacks simply say to hell with all this rigamarole and go into business illegally. When enough of them do this, the government gets so swamped that it has to relent in its attempts to enforce the laws. "Let's think of more laws we can break that will be good for the economy," said one participant during a discussion of the various illegal black enterprises that were thriving in South Africa.

At the same time that the South African government is trying to prevent blacks from bettering their own lives and enriching their country by engaging in profitable commerce, it is also heavily taxing whites to subsidize black housing and education. Apartheid is every bit as economically stupid as it is morally repugnant.

These kinds of government policies are a factor in the shift to the political left by many blacks. As one South African participant commented, "When blacks are held back economically by government rules and regulations, and then they see the politicians on TV talking about South Africa as a bastion of 'free enterprise,' is it any wonder they want to go socialist?"

At the closing dinner, I talked with Tim Fowlds, a young architect from Pretoria. Our talk soon turned to public education, and I explained that the United States has hundreds of independent school districts which take care of public education on a very local level. "That would be heaven to us," he said. He explained to me that South African "Christian National Education" was formulated and disseminated by the national government. Even private schools have to follow the gov-

ernment curricula. "It's so slanted and filled with propaganda that many South Africans really don't know their own history. Particularly the history of how the land was settled. Intelligent South Africans are having to go back and re-study their own history to get the real picture."

Dangerous Characters

After the three-day conference in Swaziland, we boarded our bus and headed north for a photographic safari through the Kruger National Game Park before returning to Johannesburg. We had disembarked at the Jeppe's Reef border station, checked through the Swazi and South African customs, and were ready to roll when we noticed the South African border station commanding officer standing outside in front of the bus. The sunshades, uniform, slicked back salt and pepper hair and beefy arms crossed above the pot belly reminded me of an old-time southern sheriff. We were informed that we would have to disembark again, get our luggage out of the cargo hold, and have it searched. I looked out the window again at the CO. Y'all in a heap a trouble!

Apartheid is more than just government-imposed segregation based on race; it is also a suffocating bureaucracy that interferes with black economic development.

When one of the young policemen assigned to perform the searches got to Bill Kelsey, a blond, bearded Texan, things got a little tense. He searched Bill's things twice. Bill had some books and magazines in his suitcase, and the policeman carefully rifled through each one. Among the books were *The Solution* and *Super Parents, Super Children*, a childrearing book by Frances Kendall. The policeman seemed to fool with *Super Parents* the longest, looking at the front and back, staring at the blurbs, thumbing through it several times.

About this time, a mini bus pulled up behind us. Leon Louw stepped out and walked over. It was an odd scene,

security police thumbing through two of South Africa's best selling books during a border search and having their authors appear out of nowhere. Louw approached the CO and addressed him in Afrikaans. He didn't sound pleased.

Pretty soon we all got back on the bus. Someone stomped aboard in a parody of a storm trooper. "Achtung!"

"Shut up!" someone hissed. "They can hear you!"

Solomon, our black driver, revved up the bus and pulled out of Jeppe's Reef. Someone started clapping and pretty soon the whole bus was ringing with applause.

Later on, I found out that an anonymous informant had alerted the border station that we needed to be searched for "literature." They probably picked on Bill because he was in the periodicals business and had been one of the more radical speakers at the conference. The informant might very well have been one of the attendees. There was one person there that no one had heard of before. He kept to himself, didn't talk with the other attendees, and wasn't conversant in libertarian themes.

Black, White, Gray

On our way back to Johannesburg, we heard a radio news report of a bomb that had gone off in one of the city's nicer shopping centers. I read about it on the front page of the *Sunday Times* the next morning. Moses Biyela, a black security guard, was lauded as a hero for having thrown a bomb blanket over a suspicious-looking package just before it exploded. He and two others were injured by the blast. The bomb was a limpet mine of Russian or Czech origin.

Another article in the paper caught my eye as well. "Kids told to keep out of 'whites only' pool" appeared on page 3 along with a photo of Mario Moulana, an irate Dutch citizen, holding two small Indian children. He had taken the toddlers to a Durban beach-front wading pool only to be told by a beach official that they would have to leave. He angrily blasted South African racial policies and was given a personal apology by the mayor of Durban. What gives? If kicking brown-skinned children out of wading pools

is *de rigueur* in South Africa, why were the papers making such a big deal of it—and making apartheid look so asinine in the process?

Many blacks simply say to hell with all the rigamarole and go into business illegally. "Let's think of more laws we can break that will be good for the economy," said one participant during a discussion of the various illegal black enterprises that were thriving in South Africa.

That evening I went for a walk with Jonathan Rachlin, an attendee from New York City. In a few minutes we found ourselves in the bustling suburb of Hillbrow. It's a densely populated area, streets lined with highrises and full of people of every color and description. There's a bohemian, cosmopolitan air about it. We stepped into a bookshop; a sign informed us that any "packages" left in the store would promptly be disposed of.

Hillbrow also has the distinction of being one of the "gray areas" where whites rent and sell property to non-whites in defiance of the law. I had to laugh. In the United States, whites circumvent fair housing laws to avoid renting or selling property to blacks. In South Africa, whites circumvent apartheid laws in order to rent or sell to blacks. It's economics. Many whites have left the country, leaving a surplus of housing behind them. The black townships, on the other hand, are bursting at the seams and suffering a housing shortage. White landlords and property owners, in order to make money, have to rent or sell to someone, and if they can't rent or sell to whites they'll rent or sell to non-whites.

The next day I decided to take a spin through Soweto in my rental car. Johan Linder and Henrik Bejke, two Swedish attendees, went along for the ride. We saw shabby little brick cottages, apartments that looked more like old prison dormitories, and a few nicer neighborhoods with more modern

looking homes. Garbage lay in uncollected piles along the streets, many of which were unpaved. NO SANCTIONS TUTU was spray-painted on a wall. As we were departing, I caught a glimpse of something and did a double take. A two story mansion under construction loomed out of a tiny lot and over its humble single story neighbors. It would probably sell for several hundred thousand dollars in the United States and was better than anything my family had ever lived in. I asked Marc Swanepoel about it that evening. "Oh yes, there are millionaires living in Soweto," he replied. "They can't build their houses in the cities because of the Group Areas Act, so they have to build them in the townships."

What surprised me during those few days in Johannesburg was the de-

At the same time that the South African government is trying to prevent blacks from bettering their own lives and enriching their country by engaging in profitable commerce, it is also heavily taxing whites to subsidize black housing and education. Apartheid is every bit as economically stupid as it is morally repugnant.

gree of integration and social interaction that I witnessed among the racial groups. A big bank had sponsored a fun run whose route took the runners by my hotel. Runners of all colors and hues, including interracial couples, trotted by. There were business conventions going on at the hotel; people of all races, sporting corporate name tags, mingled and chatted. Two older black ladies checked in and were given rooms on my floor just down the hall from my Swedish friends. When a little armored car showed up to take the hotel's money to the bank, two uniformed guards got out—one black, one white. When I had called Avis for a rental car, it was delivered by a young black man and a pretty young white girl with blond hair. A private school

near the hotel disgorged its pupils at the end of the schoolday. Black kids and white kids came out together, talking and playing, then separated as they got into the waiting cars and vans.

I did some more sightseeing in Hillbrow before I had to catch my flight. As I was walking up Claim Street, I heard startlingly loud gunshots that were uncomfortably near—and took cover in the entrance of a highrise. South African police, in an unmarked car, had fired shots into the back of a suspect's pickup just as they were passing me. The pickup was cut off by another unmarked car at the end of the block, and the suspect, a bearded white man, was yanked out of the vehicle, frisked, and cuffed. At first, I thought I had blundered into a gang rumble; the officers were wearing civilian jackets over their uniform shirts. I saw one of them holster a black semiautomatic pistol. Others crouched at the back of the pickup to look for bullet damage. A crowd had gathered.

"What happened?" asked a pretty brunette in her twenties.

I gave my eyewitness account. "And wouldn't you know it," I concluded, "I didn't have my camera with me."

"It's probably a good thing," she said. "They probably would have confiscated it. There's no freedom of the press in this country." I knew what she meant. One newspaper had been shut down a couple of weeks earlier for criticizing the government, and others carried little notices on the front page stating that they were operating under the "severe restrictions" of the "emergency regulations." "There's got to be a devolvement of government power in this country," she said as we carried on our conversation. Her accent was a mixture of British and Afrikaans.

"Those officers look like the national police," I commented. They had removed their jackets, revealing blue uniform shirts like those worn by the officers at the border stations and the officers who toted the submachine-guns at the airport.

"They are the national police," she said. "All our police are national police. The others are just traffic officers."

Earlier that day, I had talked with another lady, a middle-aged shopkeeper. "It's hard to tell who's running this country," she said indignantly, "the government or the military." She

When blacks are held back economically by government rules and regulations, and then they see the politicians on TV talking about South Africa as a bastion of "free enterprise," is it any wonder they want to go socialist?

spoke approvingly of the American "federal system" of government, with its division of power between the national government and the separate states.

It wouldn't have been surprising to hear the South African libertarians talking about "devolvement of power" and expressing admiration for a "federal system" of government, or denouncing government censorship. But these two ladies weren't libertarian ideologues—just ordinary white South African citizens that I'd met at random. If there are more like them, the ideas in *The Solution* may very well become a reality. Both said they were going to read it after I had talked with them.

After returning to Houston, I got my pictures developed and caught up on my correspondence with conference attendees. In early November of 1988 I received a Christmas card and a letter from Ncunywisa thanking me for some pictures I'd sent her and telling me that she was looking forward to reading the article I was going to write about the conference.

I had begun to follow South African events even more closely, now that I had actually been there. Little by little, things seemed to be changing for the better. Unfortunately, however, they weren't changing fast enough to keep the juggernaut from rolling over yet another decent South African.

On December 1, 1989, I received a

continued on page 54

Credo

Libertarianism without Romance

Why Capitalism Does Not Need Philosophy

by Bart Kosko

The spirit of freedom is not a spectre, not a philosophy, not an inspirational image of the Good, the True or the Beautiful. On the other hand, it does bear a striking resemblance to that most prosaic of organs, the brain . . .

I am a libertarian because ethics is a mirage and capitalism works well. This position is without romance. Audiences will not cheer it. Zealots will not adopt it. But dissenters will find it difficult to combat. I truly wish that were otherwise.

There are no shortcuts to political persuasion. It is hard to argue a political position without theological or metaphysical assumptions, and unconvincing to argue with them.

The Mirage of Ethics

Ethics is a mirage because ethical statements are neither true nor false. No possible chunk of spacetime will confirm or refute statements such as "Lying is wrong" or "Libertarianism is good." They are untestable in principle.

Such statements either express feeling or are intended to arouse feeling in an audience. They are disguised exclamations, imperatives, or commands. They are sentences and so have the linguistic form of true-or-false utterances. They look and sound like factual or logical sentences, but they do not admit empirical test or logical demonstration.

In the known history of man, not a single ethical statement has been produced that is either true or false. Until a true or false ethical statement is produced this position stands—and ethical philosophy, in particular the purely philosophical component of libertarianism, falls.

Ethical statements have the alle-

giance of our deepest emotions. This gives them an intuitive sense of self-evidence and a license for self-deception. Our emotions arbit nothing. They merely indicate that our endocrine systems are intact.

Our endocrine systems did not evolve in accord with libertarian principles but under the pressures of the competitions for mates and scarce resources. They have been shaped by hundreds of millions of years of vertebrate evolution. We share much of our emotional apparatus with reptiles and fish. But unlike those endocrine cousins we can encode our feelings in language.

Hormones and a hypothalamus do not a truth make. It may be true that we like steak, but "Steak is good" is no more true or false than is the steak in question.

Lack of ethical truths makes it impossible to argue for libertarianism in purely ethical terms. It also makes it impossible to ethically argue against libertarianism. "Workers' rights" and "dialectical materialism" are as fictitious as our alleged "natural rights." Why not come clean and abandon the lot? Even unilateral ethical disarmament seems more fruitful than living a lie.

Capitalism and Brains

Capitalism works well because free markets are like brains. They are self-organizing dynamical systems that adapt in *realtime*. The realtime property—instantaneous equilibration—is the key property. Markets and brains share many global mathematical properties: exponential equilibration independent of size, unsupervised learning of patterns (prices), insensitivity to small perturbations.

Other economic systems, such as different species of socialism, do not seem in principle capable of realtime performance for arbitrarily many agents. Indeed socialism does not even seem to be a self-organizing or stable system. If another realtime self-organizing economic system existed that satisfied preferences (in a Pareto sense, say) as well as or as fast as the capitalist system—if, for example, sufficiently benign and sufficiently powerful extraterrestrials put us on their welfare system—then this essay might argue in a different direction.

In brain theory one sees myriad learning schemes for modifying the

synaptic junctions between neurons. (The market analogy is modifying prices or exchange rates.) Some learning schemes are optimal with respect to engineering criteria (minimizing mean-squared-error or maximizing entropy) Some are stable, some chaotic. Few learning schemes work in realtime, ceaselessly and quickly adapting system behavior to the changing flux of experience. So few graduate from theorem to hardware. Mechanical brains still elude us.

In brains only realtime performance is found. Some processes unfold faster than others. But no process requires a synchronous, off-line supercomputer

that may need to run for minutes or days to estimate and control its behavior.

Hayek and von Mises were not adaptive control theorists. But they were right about the realtime coordination problem of command economies. If brains were organized as command economies, we would not have the intelligence of dinosaurs though our heads would have their size.

Capitalism Without Philosophy

Capitalism works if left alone. It needs no ethical scaffolding. Cheers, examples, and political parties may

help. Self-righteous syllogisms have not helped. The conclusions are as arbitrary as the premises. The conclusions can be directly assumed or denied without the logical exercise. If one assumes ethical premises, why not simply assume a libertarian God?

The current strategy is to surround capitalism with an ethical moat, a moat sure to evaporate in the light of science. That strategy will have difficulty surviving even what remains of this century, let alone next. Rather than surround capitalism with an ethical moat, another strategy is to abandon all ethical pretensions upfront and scorch the earth around it. □

Hollenback, "Encounter in Mbabane," *continued from page 52*

piece of mail bearing a Cape Town postmark. I recognized the handwriting and knew that it was another Christmas card.

My Dear George

Sorry for not writing for a long time. I was detained last year November 18. I suffer a lot of depression and I'm going for therapy every week. My concentration is very poor.

With Love

Ncunyiswa Agatha Hans

The South African security police had picked her up at work and thrown

her into solitary confinement.

She was accused of using the Swaziland conference as an excuse to consort with ANC supporters. While in prison, she was subjected to so much physical and mental abuse that she ended up in Groote Schuur Hospital under police guard. She was finally released from the hospital in March of 1989 and spent a long convalescence in a Catholic mission in Pretoria. In addition to poor concentration and depression, the ordeal also left her with impaired reading and writing skills. She has to attend therapy sessions every Friday at a hospital's psychiatric

outpatient department.

Libertarian International headquarters in Richmond, Virginia has received word of Ncunyiswa's plight from Pro Jack, and was planning to launch a formal protest action against the South African government over the incident. LI activity stopped short, though, because Ncunyiswa was launching her own suit against the state and outside interference could adversely affect her case. Leon Louw and the South African Free Market Foundation were backing her up.

Good luck, Ncunyiswa. And God bless. □

McClarlin, "In Defense of Walter Williams," *continued from page 45*

unpedigreed Libertarian.

As to the aptness of Meade's ideological impurity charges—as important as they are to hear—he sometimes misses the mark in his passion. Meade chides Williams for occasionally pointing to liberal morality instead of liberal economic policies for the problems ravaging Black America. Yet Meade cannot expect us to believe that "thou shalt not covet thy neighbors' goods" is not central to black social problems, or that sexual and other moral choices have no economic consequences. And morality would seem somehow connected to an individual's ability to resist the temptations in life (including welfare) that lead to social decay. In their general sense, morals are culturally institutionalized wisdom about bea-

haviorial choices—sometimes inappropriate, but generally contributory to harmony and survival. As such, they are natural subject-matter for one who studies market forces and even more so for an opinion columnist.

Finally, Meade, a white-collar professional, has assailed Williams for "macho flash" conversational flourishes which permit him to bond with blue-collar "rednecks" (as I've found in hearing from quite a few of them). Williams knows that if you are going to talk sense to people, you have got to

speak their language. While Meade may not have learned to appreciate bravado, the "irresponsible" promise of bodily harm to one's fellows for the slightest transgression is an important part of being accepted in many all-male labor situations. It's seldom meant or taken seriously.

Walter Williams is unique for his facility with language "in both worlds"—all the more reason the Libertarian Party has need of him; he can communicate libertarianism to the masses. □

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Rejoinder

Confessions of a Welfare Intellectual

by James S. Robbins

Nearly two thousand years ago the Apostle Paul commanded Christians to be "in the world but not of it." In our last issue George Smith ("Scholarship as Leechcraft") held libertarians to a similar standard. Not surprisingly, this doctrine has its detractors . . .

George H. Smith has brought to the attention of the libertarian movement the existence of a class of hypocrites within its very midst, people who oppose the state philosophically while simultaneously living off the taxpayers and hard-working businessmen. This group of "welfare intel-

lectuals" (WIs) are contrasted with the "market intellectuals," who don't enjoy access to lavish state funds but instead must compete for scarce private donations and live, as a consequence, in near poverty.

My first impression upon reading the piece was that Smith recently had a grant proposal turned down and decided to take it out on the sector of academe that doesn't have to live hand-to-mouth. Upon further reflection, however, I found this to be too reasonable an assertion. Such a vengeance piece would have been better thought-out and not suffused with tenuous logical links and incorrect generalizations.

Smith's fundamental assertion is that libertarian academics at state-supported institutions are "on welfare." They work only "a few hours" a week, get three months off in the summer, take year-long paid vacations known as sabbaticals, and invented the concept of tenure as a means to job security. It appears that Smith resents not WIs, but the entire academic career structure. After all, professors at private schools enjoy these same perks, most of which have their origins in tradition, not government action. Summer break, for example, is

rooted in the country's agricultural past. Perhaps this system needs to be changed, but libertarian professors don't merit the blame. Of course, the obvious and important difference between private professors and WIs is that the former aren't paid with money "wrested" from taxpayers. But are we to conclude that WIs should work longer hours, be paid less, or (as I suspect) quit their jobs? If the last, it doesn't matter what the academic perks are, because they have no bearing on the true issue, state financing.

The article also launches into a discussion of the way the archetypal "businessman" is snookered by WIs who write stodgy prose and engage in footnote padding, recycling old material and plagiarism, just to get grants. Smith makes it look like the businessman is a poor, unsuspecting rube who not only never does any of these things, but can't even spot them. And the market intellectuals? Honest and hard-working as the day is long, apparently.

Smith finds fault with libertarian academics who don't attack the system that funds them. I found this thought quaint and amusing. Why should libertarian academics make de-

partment life difficult for themselves, counting on the guilt complexes of administrators to keep the money coming? There are plenty of libertarians who aren't WIs who can take up the banner of university funding problems. Meanwhile, the WIs can address the multitude of other issues with which libertarians are concerned. From Smith's perspective, this is hypocrisy. From mine, it is allowing the state to sell the rope to hang socialism.

According to Smith, the primary WI counter-argument is that the government has a virtual monopoly on education, and it is impossible to pursue a productive career in the market. Thus, the WIs rationalize, they must take state funds. Fortunately for Smith, this is clearly false; no one *must* do anything. Academics in search of moral employment could get jobs at private institutions or think tanks, or, lacking appointment, work as long-shoremen or cabbies to avoid the taint of state money. In this way they could remain pure; penurious, but pure. Smith asks of the WIs, almost accusingly, "have you ever tried, even once, to escape the welfare system?" My response is, Why should I?

I've made good use of state and federal funds during my student years. I went to a state-supported college, substantially reducing my tuition bill. I've accepted merit-based fellowships from state colleges. A federal merit-based fellowship put me through graduate school. Should libertarians refrain from utilizing such opportunities? I work at a private research institute that is funded in part through Federal government contracts. I will soon embark on my professional career as an academic. I will work at a private or public school, whichever suits me. I will accept my salary gladly as fair exchange for my labor (which, being intellectual in nature, is ongoing; lectures and office hours, faculty meetings and administrative work make up only part of the "few hours" an academic puts in every week). I have no problems with any of this. By Smith's reckoning, I'm corrupt to the core.

By mine, Smith is engaging in libertarian absolutism. In his attempt to enforce his concept of purity on the movement, he would apparently see a mass exodus of libertarians from state colleges, leaving an open field to non-

libertarians in the classrooms. He would have libertarians compete only for private funds and let public funds go uncontested, increasing competition and acrimony inside the libertarian camp, while also increasing the available funding for those pursuing grants the libertarians are too noble to take.

"Is this any way to run a movement?" Smith asks. I might well ask him the same question. Does one run a movement by forcing its adherents to adopt a stance so doctrinaire that it would require them to take a virtual vow of poverty? The effect would not be for noble libertarian academics to swell the free market seminaries. Rather, most would bid the movement a fond farewell and continue in the manner to which they are accustomed. Fine, the purist might say, who needs them anyway? Such an attitude won't get one very far. Ask Leonard Peikoff.

The doctrinaire tendency in libertarian circles is strong. In the LP one has to look no further than the membership oath, or the quadrennial tactical blunder of not accepting Federal matching campaign funds. Libertarians who speak of "no compromise on

principle" and seriously debate whether or not it is permissible to use public roads or hold political office are also examples of this deviation.

The root question is as old as politics: does one remain ideologically pure and reach no one, or does one act more pragmatically and run the risk of being coopted by that which one opposes? It is a legitimate concern, but in this case misapplied. Few libertarian academics are going to cash in their ideology simply because the state "supports" them. And if some "impurities" creep into their behavior, this is more than made up for by their contributions to the academic debate, by the students they expose to new ideas, and by the security they have to develop their intellects free from the pressure of searching for the next paycheck. This does not mean that there are no opportunists in the movement, but they come with the turf. It would be better not to waste too much time figuring out who the pristine are, or the libertarian movement will dwindle to three guys wearing home-made buckskin digging for gold in the mountains, and damning Ayn Rand for her moderate tone. □

Moulton, "Conservatism In Its Latter Days," *continued from page 26*

contemptible. But I believe it is proceeding on some false assumptions, just as did the approach to the left that was in vogue in the late '60s.

Some of these assumptions are: 1) Converts to one's political position are most likely to be found among those already committed to some other political persuasion. I know of no evidence supporting this position, unless one is dealing with very trivial differences which can be dealt with, let us say, in a caucus.

2) People who share some views with oneself are probably going to be easily brought over to one's full position once they have been dazzled with a display of logic which shows up their own "inconsistencies." Sorry, but it doesn't work that way. Part of the problem is that, among those who share some general beliefs and differ on others, there is seldom agreement about which views are central and which peripheral.

3) Unless a listener is actually evil, he or she will come around to the right way of thinking once you "explain" your position properly and "educate" the person to his true interests. I suspect that this notion is related to the Objectivist influence on libertarianism, though it may be characteristic of ideologues in general. I have met many leftists who share this idea. The truth is that people typically adhere to groups and beliefs which make them feel comfortable and accepted and which enhance their sense of worth. Formal belief in doctrine in only one part of a complex nexus of loyalty.

All of these outlooks have a common theme. They are shortcuts—attempts to make ideological and political gains without the tedious process of building the mass base of support without which any political idea is doomed to irrelevance. If such strategies worked, I would have no complaint. Unfortunately, there seems to

be no real substitute for the often slow grind of old-fashioned constituency-building. This also means that there is no guarantee of success, and that if success comes it will not be final. Freedom must be fought for and secured again and again.

Now of course the targeting of groups and (within limits) the tailoring of one's message to a particular constituency are part of the normal process of political persuasion. What I am warning against is not these ordinary activities but rather the kind of frenetic "as soon as we find the magic formula we'll be all right" strategy which inevitably leads to one disappointment after another, to feelings of betrayal, and to futile who-screwed-up-this-time witchhunts. The most important fact to keep in mind is that political advocacy is an entrepreneurial activity, not a matter of "Open, sesame." □

Reviews

Economics and the Environment: A Reconciliation,
edited by Walter E. Block. The Fraser Institute, 1990, xix + 332 pp., \$19.95

Of Smokestacks and Rhinos

Robert Higgs

Now that communist ideology has been completely discredited and the evil empire is in disarray, what is the greatest threat to freedom in the western world? Oddly, it may be environmentalism. I say oddly because there would seem to be no conflict of interest here. Paralleling Richard Nixon's infamous remark about Keynesians, one might say that "we are all environmentalists now." Obviously, no one wants a world where the water cannot be drunk, the air cannot be breathed. But just as Nixon's Keynesians were not all alike, so people disagree, sometimes violently, about how to deal with environmental problems.

Walter Block's *Economics and the Environment*, a collection of ten essays by economists (and a couple of near economists), represents an attempt to reconcile the differences between economists and those who call themselves environmentalists. As Block admits at the outset, "two more irreconcilable perspectives could hardly be found." (vii) He recognizes that not everyone will accept economic reasoning, because some people's environmentalism is more a crusade against free markets than a search for optimal solutions to social problems related to the environment. Block's contributors speak to "the vast number of people

who are open-minded on this issue." (viii) One hopes that such an audience exists, but one fears that the masses are more apathetic than open-minded and that here, as elsewhere, policy making will be dominated by passionate minorities and special interests in league with corrupt politicians.

The thread that runs through all the essays comes as no surprise to libertarians: for the most part, environmental problems are caused by the government, not by the market. If governments would only confine themselves to performing their one essential function—defining and enforcing private property rights over all valuable resources—then the market process would allocate all resources, including environmental resources such as ocean water or wild animal species, to their most highly valued uses. Where we see the most extreme environmental degradation—Eastern Europe now serves as a blatant example—we find government actions at the root of it. To give the government even greater powers in order to solve environmental problems is to pour kerosene on the fire.

More than a quarter of the volume is taken up by Chapter 1, written by the Canadian economists John Chant, Donald McFetridge, and Douglas Smith. This constitutes a primer on environmental economics from the perspective of mainstream (neoclassical) economics. The exposition is clear, bal-

anced and temperate, confirming that even on emotionally charged issues economists tend to be unexciting. This essay, like several of the others, is pitched toward Canadian readers. It takes the form of a running critique of such groups as the Science Council of Canada and the Gamma Group at McGill University. The authors find the spokesmen for these groups to be anti-market, anti-growth, and profoundly ignorant of economics.

Knocking down such ignoramuses is easy, provided one accepts the economists' own premises. The economists repeatedly show that the environmentalists err by "confusing the breakdown of a market with the absence of a market." (61) Admittedly, the specification and enforcement of the private property rights required to undergird a market may not always be possible or economically warranted. But given the rights, the market process tends toward an efficient allocation of resources. Notably, "economic efficiency involves minimizing the cost of all inputs for a given level of output, while conservationist methodology involves minimizing only one input [e.g., fossil fuel] and wastefully using the rest." (88)

The same economic logic is employed in most of the other chapters, each of which has a narrower focus. The authors include several familiar authorities in the pro-market camp: Thomas E. Borcherding, John Baden, Richard L. Stroup, Terry Anderson, Jane Shaw, Edwin O. Dolan. In general the analysis is clear and, so far as any neoclassical economic analysis can be, persuasive.

Along with the economics, the reader gets some excellent descriptions of technical matters, including global warming, ozone depletion, toxic wastes, and acid rain. The informed and balanced assessments of the facts, apart from how they are interpreted, make the volume worthwhile. How many nonspecialists appreciate that significant global warming is not really an

established phenomenon? How many know that Love Canal was not really a public health disaster? How many understand that the causes and consequences of acid rain are still poorly understood by scientists?

Chapter 9, which consists of Murray Rothbard's previously published paper on "Law, Property Rights, and Air Pollution" (*Cato Journal*, 1982), differs markedly from the rest of the essays. It is not so much about the environment as it is about a revolutionary restructuring of the entire legal system, with some attention given to how this sweeping change would affect liability for harming the environment.

Rothbard would—what else?—begin by abolishing the government as we know it. His proposal calls for eliminating the executive and legislative branches. Further, he would recognize no crimes, that is, offenses against society or the state, but only torts, that is, actionable offenses against one person by another. He would require strict liability but exacting standards of proof. Only victims, their heirs, and assignees would have standing to sue. In light of his libertarian legal theory, Rothbard concludes: "Every statute or administrative rule is therefore illegitimate and itself invasive and a criminal interference with the property rights of non-criminals." (258)

All this is great fun, and libertarians enjoy debating such ideas over beer, but I question whether reprinting Rothbard's essay serves the editor's purpose in reaching "the vast number of people who are open-minded" on environmental issues. Rothbard's proposals, no matter how logically they are argued, are likely to strike the typi-

cal middle-of-the-road reader as bizarre. Proposals that begin with "First we abolish the government" are dead on arrival. However intriguing they are to committed libertarians, they are more likely to detract from than to advance practical efforts to restrain the many current government actions that are destroying both the environment and our liberties.

In the final chapter, Block leads the reader on a rousing romp through a series of environmental problems, showing how each can be solved by creating an appropriate private property right. Block makes good use of something libertarians could use more of, namely, a sense of humor. The chapter is actually fun to read, although it is also well argued and heavily documented. Here is a list of environmental problems: municipal waste disposal, oil spills at sea, destruction of rain forests, extinction of animal species. Here is a list of solutions: private property rights in waste dumps, private property rights in ocean waters, private property rights in forest lands, private property rights in animals such as elephants, alligators, and rhinoceroses.

Nor is Block content with armchair theorizing of the sort that Terry Anderson aptly warns against in his essay. Block shows, for example, that private ownership of rhino farms is not just imaginable; it is already a reality, at least in prototype. Likewise for alligators and elephants. The lesson is clear from history. The difference between highly valued species that have, or may soon, become extinct and those that have flourished is that the latter have been made subject to private ownership while the former have not—just

compare the buffalo and the cow. Any valuable thing that exists as a common property resource is at risk of destruction. Theory and history, not to speak of common sense, speak with one voice on this question.

Surveying the whole book, one is tempted to conclude that the battle, at least the battle of ideas, now has been won. The radical environmentalists now must take flight before the economists' superior command

of pertinent theory and fact. Of course, no such capitulation will occur. By inquiring into why it won't, one gains a deeper appreciation of the nature of today's environmentalism.

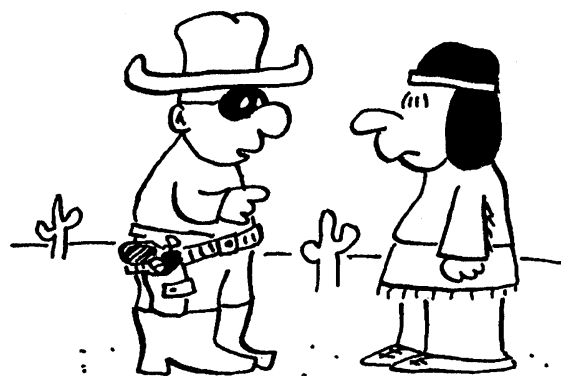
Several authors recognize, but only in passing, the truth expressed by Stroup and Baden: "environmentalism has become a genuine social and, for some, quasi-religious movement." (131) In short, it is an ideology. Like socialism and communism, it is profoundly anti-individualist, anti-private property, anti-market, indeed in many of its manifestations anti-human. (One of the best ways to understand an ideology is to find out what a belief system encourages its adherents to hate.)

Radical environmentalists do not want simply to achieve environmental goals such as cleaner water or air, preservation of the rhinos, and so forth. They care at least as much about *how* the objectives are achieved. For them, it

Environmentalists want not only a different set of outcomes; they want a different kind of human beings. It is not enough that people do the right thing. They must also do it in the right spirit, the spirit of selfless communitarianism and mystical oneness with the Great Ecology.

is no answer at all to be told that private property rights and market processes will do the job. For them, doing it that way is not doing it at all, because they want not only a different set of outcomes; they want a different kind of human beings. It is not enough that people do the right thing. They must also do it in the right spirit, the spirit of selfless communitarianism and mystical oneness with the Great Ecology. For environmentalists, the dreadful thing about water pollution, for example, is not that it diminishes the value of the water in providing alternative human satisfactions. The terrible thing is that it is immoral. It is tantamount to killing your mother.

Notably, Rothbard's chapter also



"But I took you as a dependent!"

rests on a nonnegotiable moral foundation. His, of course, is the nonaggression axiom that most libertarians accept. In this view also, pollution is immoral, because it is an invasion of the rights of individuals. Obviously, a vast gulf separates the morality of the libertarian and that of the radical environmentalist.

The gulf cannot be bridged by neo-classical economics. Although mainstream economists rarely think very deeply about such matters, their views also rest on moral assumptions as well as assumptions about other important issues such as the comparability of values across individuals. When mainstream economists argue in favor of "efficiency," as they do incessantly, they are implicitly accepting that each individual has a right to consume the goods that maximize his utility. When they speak of "social efficiency," they are implicitly accepting that market prices are appropriate weights in the aggregation of values across individuals.

Austrian School economists accept the former assumption but reject the latter. In Rothbard's words, "costs are purely subjective and not measurable in monetary terms . . . Costs cannot be added up. There is no such thing as 'social transaction costs,' and [costs] cannot be compared" between different situations. (236) The concept of social efficiency is, in Rothbard's view, not meaningful. One ought not to pursue the will-o'-the-wisp of efficiency; one ought to defend people's rights.

This familiar disagreement among the economists themselves, smoothed over by Block in his introduction, reminds us that no genuine reconciliation can be achieved when differences arise from fundamentally incompatible assumptions. And such is the case in the disagreements between *either* the mainstream economists or the Austrian economists and the radical environmentalists. Block maintains that the economists merely aim to promote "using free market means for ecological ends" (vii) and that the economists' "criticism must not be interpreted as opposition to the *goals* of those who speak out in defense of spaceship earth." (xi) In reality the conflict runs far deeper, and it has to do with ends as well as means. □

The Tempting of America,
by Robert H. Bork. Free Press, 1990, xiv. + 432 pp., \$22.50.

The Law and Mr Bork

Leland B. Yeager

Judge Bork's account in this book of tactics employed during the controversy over his nomination to the Supreme Court rekindled the outrage I felt at the time. Within an hour after President Reagan announced Bork's appointment, Senator Teddy Kennedy went on television from the Senate floor: "Robert Bork's America is a land in which women would be forced into back-alley abortions, blacks would sit at segregated lunch counters, rogue police would break down citizens' doors in midnight raids"—and so on. Senator Howard Metzenbaum said that Bork favored the forced sterilization of women workers, and continued saying so long after it had been shown that his charge was baseless. Planned Parenthood advertised that Bork had upheld a zoning board's power to prevent a grandmother from living with her grandchildren because she did not belong to the nuclear family. Yet the case in question was one that Bork not only had not decided but had never written about or even discussed. Senator Joe Biden and other liberal Democratic members of the Judiciary Committee delayed confirmation hearings beyond all precedent to give the campaign of lies time to take effect.

Yet not all of the opposition rested on misrepresentation. In part it involved apparent failure to grasp the elementary distinction between deciding court cases to achieve desired results and deciding by neutral application of the law. Committee hearings excerpted in the book suggest that Senator Specter was one who could not grasp that distinction. "Because I was, out of necessity, patient with him,"

Bork writes, "a lot of people not versed in constitutional law got the impression that this was a serious constitutional discussion."

Bork's personal ordeal occupies only a few chapters toward the end of his book. His main purpose is to expound the "original understanding" approach to Constitutional interpretation. He convinces me that no other approach to the interpretation of legal documents is intellectually coherent.

In Bork's view, judges have the job of reading the words of legal documents, including contracts, statutes, and constitutions, as their authors and ratifiers understood those words. Bork's is not the straw-man doctrine attacked by Justice Brennan in a speech at Georgetown University in 1985; it is not a search for "subjective intentions." "If someone found a letter from George Washington to Martha telling her that what he meant by the power to lay taxes was not what other people meant, that would not change our reading of the Constitution in the slightest. . . . If Congress enacted a statute outlawing the sale of automatic rifles and did so in the Senate by a vote of 51 to 49, no court would overturn a conviction because two senators in the majority testified that they really had intended only to prohibit the *use* of such rifles." (p. 144)

A constitution, like statutes and other legal documents, presumably represents a compromise among the parties who adopted it. What binds a judge is the words that the parties managed to agree on; and if any genuine issue of interpretation arises, the words are to be read in the sense commonly accorded to them at the time the document was written. Judges have no business altering the compromise into closer attune-

ment to the supposed intentions or wishes of one of the parties—or into closer attunement to their own personal preferences.

The business of judges is to apply the law. The non-neutral pursuit of good policy is the prerogative of constitution-makers, legislators, and voters, not judges. Yet Bork's critics routinely misrepresented his questioning of the legal soundness of particular court de-

Opposition to Bork involved apparent failure to grasp the elementary distinction between deciding court cases to achieve desired results and deciding by neutral application of the law.

cisions as expressions of his opinions about the desirability of policies.

Bork thinks that the anti-school-segregation result of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) was correct and that the Supreme Court could have reached it by a straightforward reading of the Fourteenth Amendment. He regrets that the Court instead employed strained reasoning and appealed to social science, thereby seeming to legitimize a cavalier though well-intentioned attitude toward the law and giving judicial activism an undeserved good name.

Critics twisted Bork's much-cited remark about an "ink blot" into an expression of scorn for the Ninth Amendment in particular and for privacy and human rights in general. What Bork meant was that if an ink blot prevents reading a part of a document, that fact does not give judges *carte blanche* to imagine and enforce whatever they wish the obliterated words to have been. Similarly, if the meaning of a passage is genuinely unclear and resistant to interpretation, then judges should accept that fact and restrain themselves from forcing whatever meaning they please onto the recalcitrant document.

Just what the unenumerated rights are that the Ninth Amendment alludes to may be unclear, but Federal judges twist the amendment and reach for un-

delegated power when they read it as entitling them to strike down whatever state laws they please by reference to unenumerated rights. If the framers of the Bill of Rights had meant to authorize judges to invent new rights for that purpose, they could have said so clearly. Yet they did not. (Incidentally, Bork, following Russell Caplan, offers a plausible conjecture about the purpose and meaning of the Ninth Amendment. It gave reassurance that adoption of the Federal Constitution did not undercut rights already guaranteed to the people under various state constitutions, statutes, and common law.)

Stretching and straining the provisions of the Constitution to strike down or rewrite state laws, even in the name of personal liberty (as in *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 1965, and *Roe v. Wade*, 1973, the contraception and abortion cases), is risky business. One of our country's chief current problems—I speak for myself in much of what follows and possibly not always for Bork—is the arrogant activism of judges who apparently feel entitled to read their own views, or currently fashionable views, into the Constitution. Their activism undermines what the clear wording of the Constitution itself establishes as a *federal* system of government. One recent example is the attempt of a U.S. District judge to impose fines on individual members of the city council of Yonkers, New York, for voting contrary to his instructions on an issue of public housing. More recently the same judge ruled that it is unconstitutional for the New York subway system to ban panhandling. Still another example appears in cases like *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964) and *Lucas v. Forty-Fourth General Assembly* (1964), in which the Supreme Court seized an undelegated power to mandate the restructuring of representation in state legislatures.

Federalism, as opposed to a unitary national government, helps protect personal freedom. Its division of governmental powers among national and state (and local) levels is an important application of the principle of separation of powers, along with their separation among the legislative, executive, and judicial branches.

Federalism also has costs. One of

them—a cost worth paying—is that state governments may make mistakes, free from national restraint, provided only that they do not violate Constitutional provisions. Otherwise, judges lack authority to correct the errors of state and local authorities. Judges should recognize that they are not infallible. They should not strain after grounds to override, especially by 5 to 4 in the Supreme Court, the considered judgments of legislators and executive officials who, like themselves, are also sworn to uphold the Constitution. Unlike Federal judges, by the way, state legislators and officials are subject to monitoring by their voters, as well as by national and worldwide public opinion.

This point draws sneers in some libertarian circles as "majoritarianism." But the view so stigmatized does not at all mean that the majority is necessarily right and that might (of majority vote) makes right. Majorities can be wrong, of course; and when they are wrong, those who know better should work to change their minds. But to suppose that setting error straight is the special prerogative of Federal judges tends to undermine federalism and constitutionalism itself.

Some libertarians champion so-called principled judicial activism, activism in the direction of economic laissez-faire. Articles to this effect by

If someone found a letter from George Washington to Martha telling her that what he meant by the power to lay taxes was not what other people meant, that would not change our reading of the Constitution in the slightest.

Bernard H. Siegan, Richard A. Epstein, Roger Pilon, Randy E. Barnett, and others appear in *Cato Journal*, Winter 1985. In *The New Right v. The Constitution* (Cato Institute, 1986), Stephen Macedo takes Judge Bork, then already mentioned as a possible appointee to the Supreme Court, as his chief target. Along with Edwin Meese and one or

two other supposed members of the New Right, Bork is accused of "deep moral skepticism," "radical moral skepticism," "moral cynicism," and of being "diametrically opposed to morality itself." (A footnote on page 35 even associates Bork with the view "that justice is no more than the interest of the stronger.") Bork, along with Justice Rehnquist, "gives us moral skepticism in the service of majoritarianism, masquerading as an innocent respect for the constitutional text." (34; note the word "masquerading") Macedo, in righteous contrast, calls for "fusing constitutional and moral theory." (48) "The Constitution's aspirations are moral," he says, (58) and should be "fleshed out by the interpreter."

Ethical theory and even moral indignation and self-righteous moralizing do have a legitimate role in discussions of public policy, but more than enough of such attitudes are already being urged as the basis of court decisions and Constitutional interpretation. I myself take ethics seriously as an important branch of social science, but share Bork's wariness about confusing particular persons' ethical notions with Constitutional law.

In a chapter on "The Theorists of Conservative Constitutional Revisionism," Bork does discuss the views of Siegan and Epstein and also of Justice John Marshall Harlan. He neglects Macedo, perhaps out of charity.

Libertarians or adherents of the philosophy of the Founding Fathers—or however they may describe themselves—will not achieve their goals by preaching continued judicial activism. Libertarian judicial activism is, after all, judicial activism. An early and notorious example of the syndrome, as Bork explains, was the *Dred Scott* decision of 1856. (Yet Senator Simon, employing nasty innuendo, mentioned during the confirmation hearings that he had recently read Chief Justice Taney's *Dred Scott* opinion and found it "an awful lot like Robert Bork.")

Before the mid-1930s the Supreme Court tended to be activist on behalf of conservative economic ideas, since then on behalf of left-liberal ideas. Nowadays, as Bork warns, judicial activism is the weapon of an adversary culture of alienated elitists. This culture

shows itself in "the increasing, by now almost overwhelming, politicization of the law schools, where much constitutional scholarship is now only politics." (348) Bork warns of the consequences when the Supreme Court "is perceived as a political rather than a legal institution." (348)

Libertarians should beware of conferring additional respectability on what is, after all, an undermining of the law and the Constitution and the protections afforded by a federal system of limited and separated powers. Champions of libertarian judicial activism may indeed win plaudits in their own narrow circle for purity of doctrine and for ingenuity in its supposed service. But ingenuity, however admirable in other fields of endeavor, is out of place in the reading of legal documents.

Many of us can imagine a political and constitutional system better than the one we now have. Some of us can contrive ingenious libertarian interpretations of constitutional provisions from our understanding of the political philosophy of the Framers and of what they supposedly intended to put into the Constitution. As Milton Friedman (echoing Voltaire) has often warned, however, "The best is the enemy of the good." What legally counts is the words, straightforwardly interpreted, that the Framers managed actually to get into the document.

"It is no small matter," Bork warns, (353) "to discredit the foundations upon which our constitutional freedoms have always been sustained and substitute as a bulwark only the abstract propositions of moral philosophy. To do that is, in fact, to display a lightmindedness terrifying in its frivolity."

One problem of Constitutional interpretation that Bork admittedly does not solve is, I suppose, insoluble. It is what to do about unconstitutional laws and erroneous court decisions that have become deeply entrenched not only in legal precedent but in the very fabric of American life. Today's judges should be admonished not to use the errors of their predecessors as excuses for extending the scope of those errors, but it is expecting too much that they should undo all transgressions of the past. "There are times when the best

we can do is say to the Court, 'Go and sin no more.'" (159) Paper money provides an example. The Constitution grants the Federal government only limited powers, ones either explicitly named or necessary and proper for the exercise of the named ones. It is doubtful, therefore, that the Federal government ever had Constitutional power to issue paper money. Nevertheless, paper money and the Federal Reserve System have become so deeply entrenched into American life that a Court decision purporting to abolish the whole business with one stroke would be irresponsible.

Majorities can be wrong, of course; and when they are wrong, those who know better should work to change their minds. But to suppose that setting error straight is the special prerogative of Federal judges undermines federalism and constitutionalism itself.

Such a decision would undercut one of the chief purposes of law itself, which is to enhance the predictability and confidence with which individuals can cooperate with one another. When legislation, court decisions, and real life have long gotten far out of correspondence with the text of the Constitution, then the job of repair, whether through reshaping of institutions, Constitutional amendment, or otherwise, falls not on judges alone but on legislators and the electorate as well. (I speak for myself on this point, although I suppose that Bork's view is similar.)

Bork deserves congratulations on expounding even abstruse matters in a clear style. His prose is a joy to read. An example: "The judge who states that tradition and morality are his guides leaves himself free to pick through them for those particular freedoms that he prefers. History and tradition are very capacious suitcases, and a judge may find a good deal pleasing to himself packed into them, if only because he has packed the bags himself." □

Parting With Illusions,
by Vladimir Pozner. Atlantic Monthly, 1990, 324pp., \$19.95.

Still Fibbing After All These Years

Richard Kostelanetz

In the wake of the publication of his memoir, *Parting With Illusions*, Vladimir Pozner has appeared on numerous American interview programs, both local and national. Every time I hear him I'm surprised that none of these purportedly sharp inquisitors ask him how someone living abroad all his adult life could sound like such an up-to-date American. Every interviewer seems to take for granted a competence that no other Soviet displays, a competence that is really quite extraordinary if you consider that he never visited these shores between 1948 and 1986. The focus of my profile, published in the March 1990 *Liberty*, was: who is this guy and how does he do it?

My conclusion is that his communicative skills depended upon his genuine love for American culture, reflected in his enthusiasm for our literature and folk music, and then upon an imaginative projection that was essentially disingenuous—that he was a free, western-style commentator in a country that, at least until recently, did not know such creatures. This last talent depended in turn upon a story-telling talent that was known to his childhood friends in New York and has nothing to do with politics, even though it could be adapted to political ends.

On page 24 he acknowledges the childhood fibbing that others noticed at the time:

I wanted so much to be thought of as a Russian that I told lies. In the summer of 1942 or 1943 [at the age of 8 or 9], I was in summer camp in the Catskills, where we were visited by a delegation of Soviet women. All summer I had been telling the kids and the counselors that I was

Russian and, of course, spoke Russian. Suddenly, here was this delegation, and I didn't speak a word of Russian!

However, I would be remiss if I did not note that none of his childhood friends, including one mentioned in the book, remember such enthusiasm about Russia. Indeed, more than one told me that, contrary to his autobiography, his sudden emigration from America was a surprise to them.

Otherwise, Pozner revises stories told to me (and to his friends in Russia). Instead of staying in New York in 1948 and attending Columbia University, he now reveals he moved to East Berlin with his family and moved again with them to Moscow in 1953; he told me, by contrast, that he came at the time directly from New York, entirely on his own volition. *Parting With Illusions* recounts that his five years in East Berlin was so distasteful to him that you can understand why a fanciful person might want to abolish the experience from his life. (He told me how people were afraid to befriend him in the early fifties, purportedly his last years in New York; but the book reveals that when the Pozner family arrived in Moscow, about that time, even former friends were reluctant to meet his family, for fear of associating with "foreigners." Not unlike a novelist, Pozner has taken feelings from one scene and transferred them to another.)

The book repeats the stories I reported about his father playing on an émigré Russian basketball team in Paris, incidentally lending credibility to the source that told me about it—a source that is also responsible for divulging much of my report that was not included in *Parting With Illusions*. Pozner repeats in his book (and on American television as well) the story

told to me in Moscow about his father's departure from the movie biz in 1948, even though others in that office at the time doubt it. On television here this year, Pozner said he was not allowed to appear on Soviet television until 1986, contradicting a story told to me in Moscow about his regularly appearing several years before. He told me that most of his journalism was done in Russian, not English; but there is no mention of such writing here. Though the book discussed his career as a translator, he does not repeat his claim to have produced a book of John Donne translations; Joseph Brodsky assures me this did not exist. As I said in my profile, what fibs Pozner tells are mostly about himself and his immediate relatives, rather than politics.

Pozner wrote the book at the prodding of Brian Kahn, an unidentified American who coholds the copyright and writes an introduction in which he reveals that he made the book proposal with transcripts of interviews made in Moscow.

As Kahn tells it, Pozner initially resisted him. "His discomfort was dis-

Every time I hear him interviewed in American media, I'm surprised that none of his purportedly sharp inquisitors ask him how someone living abroad all his adult life could sound like such an up-to-date American. Every interviewer seems to take for granted a competence that no other Soviet displays.

played in various ways. Here we were, collaborating on a book we both wanted to see written. Yet Vladimir, a humorous and friendly person, was often cool and distant. Never once during my visits to his Moscow apartment did he offer me a cup of tea or even a glass of water." Why was Pozner reluctant to produce the book he purportedly supported? Some readers might cite political reasons, such as difficulties in getting the government clearance, for-

merly required in Russia, to publish anything in the West; for failure to get such permission would tarnish his self-image as a Western-style commentator. (I recollect that Pozner didn't accept an invitation to meet me in my Moscow hotel, rather than outside it as we had before. I later realized that I had created a situation that would have belied his image—without a pass from the hotel or a foreign passport, no visitor to the hotel could have gotten through the front door. Nonetheless, I did get served tea at his apartment, and, as noted before, he gave me the original tape of our interview conducted on his reel-to-reel. He also drove me to the Finland train station in time to make the 22:20 to Helsinki.)

Don't forget that I liked Pozner, initially as a fellow New Yorker who had gone to a companion Greenwich Village elementary school several years before me, and as a literate colleague with similar cultural interests. Living in West Berlin in those years, away from the U.S. for the first time in 16 years, I was cultivating Americans and ex-Americans; and I figured that were I ever in Moscow for long, Pozner's company would be a pleasure. He kept his mind in America, even if his body had long gone away. The initial draft of my profile, titled "Radio Moscow's Best 'American,'" reflected my enthusiasm. It was only when I did a little extra research into his childhood here that I discovered he had set me up to be the conduit of his fabrications. Had that first draft appeared immediately after I wrote it, I could have been exposed as a fool, which was not what I had in mind, thanks.

I brought mixed feelings to *Parting With Illusions*. I wondered about the truth of charming stories that could not be checked from here. Nonetheless, some of Pozner's writing is marvelous, simply as description. On the back of the dust jacket is reprinted his memoir of the chaos accompanying Stalin's death:

The vast crowds surged along, and as they moved, people were crushed to death by the sheer weight of this multiheaded and multilegged monster. Some died gasping their last breath, rib cages cracking, plastered against building walls and cast-iron fences. Others, shoved into the sharp

contours of army trucks, snapped in two like matchsticks. Yet others slipped on the ice—the winter of 1952-53 had been exceptionally cold, and though it was March, the streets of Moscow were still covered with ice and snow—and were trampled to death. This nightmare acquired apocalyptic proportions around Trubnaya Square. The boulevard leading to it from Stretenka Street dipped steeply, and as the multitudes advanced, people lost their footing and fell—first one, then another, then several, all going down with muffled cries. As the bodies piled up, more people tripped on them and fell. The crowd panicked and surged forward, literally lifting the mounted police, horses and all, into the air and then trampling them, too. The plunging terrified the horses, the cursing police swinging their clubs in a last desperate effort to stave off the inevitable, the black masses of people swirling and eddying along, engulfing everything in their path like some terrifying maelstrom—who could have imagined a more fitting kind of final rite for the monster who even in death took so many with him.

Wow, give this writer an A. I also

could imagine an anthology of essays reprinting his brief critical characterizations of Soviet leaders.

The excellence of such prose persuaded me that the real tragedy of Pozner's life is that he should have been an English-language author, writing both nonfiction and fiction about a variety of experiences; but coming of age in Moscow, where such a career was impossible, unable to emigrate to an English-speaking country, he was steered into what he could do best for the state—talk to Americans, initially for *Soviet Life*, then on Radio Moscow, finally on American networks. His career epitomizes the tragedy of talent in a closed economic system. Now that he is trying to enter ours, the publishing business requires that first he write a good-seller about his exceptional experience. In this respect, he resembles the African-American writer of, say, fifty years ago who couldn't expect a contract for a second book unless he first wrote one about being black. Since Vladimir Pozner has paid those dues, so to speak, I for one look forward to his future work. □

The Illusions of Journalism —

When I first wrote my profile of Vladimir Pozner several years ago ("Pozner the Poseur," March 1990), I thought I had a successful piece, full of explanations of mystery, along with nuance and character and everything else that makes an article interesting. Instead, I discovered some limitations of American print journalism. The folks commissioning the article had never seen Pozner's performance. (It is hard for me now to account for why they commissioned it; I think someone told someone else that Pozner was unusually interesting.) One editor wanted me to challenge him with a question about the situation of Jews in Russia, without recognizing they were not relevant to my piece, or even realizing in advance, as I did, that he would probably provide an answer so sympathetic that, once they read it, they would prefer not to print it. Though the article was accepted, and fully paid for, it was eventually returned. Offered to another prominent magazine, it came back, with the editor's testimony that he too had never seen Pozner. (They were yet other ex-

amples of what Marshall McLuhan once called a PROB—a print-oriented bastard.)

An editor of a mass weekly insisted that I find out if Pozner "was KGB." I replied that, if I asked him, of course he'd say no, declaring again his independence of the state machinery, in which case I would be obliged to call this another fib, even though I had no evidence to the contrary at all, and did not know how to get any. (I remember asking this editor, "Pray tell, where can I find a list of members?")

A second editor, of a far more prestigious cultural monthly, made the same glib request about "Pozner's ultimate affiliations," making me wonder whether these two guys went to the same journalism school. A third editor, loyal anti-communist that he was, had trouble accepting the truth that Pozner had fibbed in America as well as Russia. I gathered from this that my portrait had eschewed, or transcended, journalistic clichés for portraying Soviets. And perhaps nothing is more sacred to contemporary journalism than its own clichés.

—RK

The Farm Fiasco,
by James Bovard. ICS Press, 1989, 356pp., \$18.95.

Harvesting Welfare

Brian Doherty

No matter how fine an *a priori* understanding one has about how government interference in the economy is damaging, it never hurts to be up on the empirical details of the damage caused by specific programs. That is why James Bovard's *The Farm Fiasco* is a worthwhile book.

Agricultural policy is a particularly fertile area for investigation into "waste, fraud and abuse" (a phrase repeated so often in this book that it's almost a mantra) on the part of government economic managers. The cost of government programs and the higher food prices to consumers that have resulted from them has been \$200 billion in the '80s alone—enough money to have bought outright all the farms in 33 states.

The Farm Fiasco is filled with appalling statistics of this sort. But even more appalling are the infuriating ignorance and mendacity displayed by the congressional and Department of Agriculture bozos who are responsible for continuing farm policies that work at cross-purposes with each other. These absurd policies simultaneously increase the trade deficit, harm the consumer with higher food prices, and contribute to many of the problems that they are allegedly intended to solve, such as crop surpluses, farmers' debt burden and soil depletion.

The bedrock of agricultural policy is the concept of parity. This is the notion that the ratio of farm to non-farm income had achieved some sort of Platonic perfection in the very healthy (for agriculture) days before World War I, and that this ratio must be preserved in perpetuity, despite the enor-

mous lowering of the cost of production for major crops as the result of technological advances.

With the banner of parity raised high, the USDA runs into its most prevalent problem: its programs generally work at cross-purposes. The USDA sets price floors that *encourage* overproduction because the farmer is guaranteed a (usually above-market level) sale to the federal government; they then pay farmers not to use their land so as to *cut* production; and then they spend money trying to develop *new* farmland out of deserts. "Agricultural economist B. H. Hibbard suggested . . . that the guiding rule of federal policy makers was, 'Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth.'" (p. 267)

Government floods the farm market with cheap credit given to the least efficient farmers, who couldn't get financing in normal credit markets; when farmland prices soar as more money chases the same land, the cry goes up for even more cheap credit. Soon hapless farmers are buried under debt they couldn't have gotten without government help; this becomes a farm bankruptcy crisis that leads to demands for more federal intervention and control; and so on.

Bovard's book is copiously researched; but his organizational and explanatory techniques are not as good as his research abilities. This book desperately needs a glossary explaining what each of the numerous cited acronymed farm programs are and what they do. And, goddamnit, it doesn't have an index! This is hardly excusable in *any* non-fiction work, and it is particularly annoying in one that discusses as many different crops, programs, and effects as this does. If a reader were inter-

ested in discovering the effects of government intervention on, say, the wheat market, he'd have to thumb through chapters about export markets, low-interest loans, and the history of the USDA's war against the market, to name only three; an index would help this intrepid reader in his search.

Not that *The Farm Fiasco* is a difficult or unrewarding book to read all the way through. Happily, Bovard's style is clear, with agreeable touches of humor. One favorite of mine is a passage about the USDA of the 1930s "'solving the paradox of want amidst plenty by eliminating the plenty.'" (25) There is also this:

Congressmen justify the sugar program as protecting Americans from "the roller-coaster of international sugar prices," as Congressman Byron Dorgan declared. Unfortunately, Congress protects consumers against the "roller-coaster" by pegging American sugar prices on the level of the Goodyear blimp, floating far above the amusement park. (62)

The examples of the horrid demagogery and ignorance of our esteemed Congress will inspire bitter laughter. Senator Tom Harkin and Congressman

America's absurd farm policies simultaneously increase the trade deficit, damage the consumer through higher food prices, and contribute to many of the problems that they are allegedly intended to solve, such as crop surpluses, farmers' debt burden and soil depletion.

Kiki de la Gaza end up looking particularly idiotic.

The story Bovard tells is compelling and blood-boiling enough to make anyone who isn't a congressman from a farm state or a USDA bureaucrat want to read on. The facts he marshals support long-standing arguments against State economic intervention: it results in cartelization, gross market disruptions, and impoverishes the many to enrich the few. Did you know that "the

net worth of the average full-time farmer is more than ten times higher than that of the average American family" and that "the average full-time farmer earned more than \$152,000 in 1987"? (6) Or that *individual beekeepers* have received over a million tax dollars per year for their surplus honey—at a price support level about 50 percent above world market prices? Of course, the programs cost the taxpayers and food consumers (that's all of us, folks) far more than the recipients benefit. Yet we are assailed with sad tales of the impoverishment of farmers and the imminent collapse of U.S. agriculture if we don't pump in *more* money and institute *more* controls.

But observe that it is only a few crops that have their markets almost wholly controlled by the government: and the uncontrolled ones are healthier, in terms of prices, bankruptcies and land values, than controlled ones such as wheat, corn, and rice.

What would the costs be of cutting off federal aid and intervention in agriculture?

If it were not for federal agricultural programs, farm exports might be \$10 billion or \$20 billion higher, America would dominate world grain markets, American farms would be more efficient, low-income Americans would have healthier diets, the government's role in the average American's life would be reduced, our environment would be cleaner, the world trading system would be more open, America would be more respected abroad, and workers would be allowed to keep a greater share of their paychecks. Farmers' debt would be lower because government would not have begged them to borrow, and farmers' earned income would be higher. (324) □

The true measure of a free spirit lies outside the cash nexus . . .

Novelist, Naturalist, Anarchist

Bill Kauffman

"Resist much, obey little," Walt Whitman begged us, and if some Americans listened, most did not. Certainly our writers have learned that obedience pays, as they fill out grant forms in triplicate and kiss the broad asses of National Endowment for the Arts bureaucrats.

The recent death of Edward Abbey, a True Son of Whitman, went unremarked in most newspapers and magazines. Abbey was a hillbilly intellectual, an adopted son of Arizona, a craggy-faced old man with a great bushy beard who wrote passionate comic novels and irreverent lovesongs to the desert.

Ed Abbey was a *man*, a free-swinging iconoclast who twinned a commitment to the writers' craft with a homespun anarchism that even now, a year after his death, is inspiring young rebels to feats of sabotage and courage in the American West.

Edward Abbey was born in 1927, on a hardscrabble farm in Appalachian Pennsylvania. His father, Paul Revere Abbey, was a Wobbly and a farmer who's still going strong in his 90s. His mother Mildred was a partisan of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

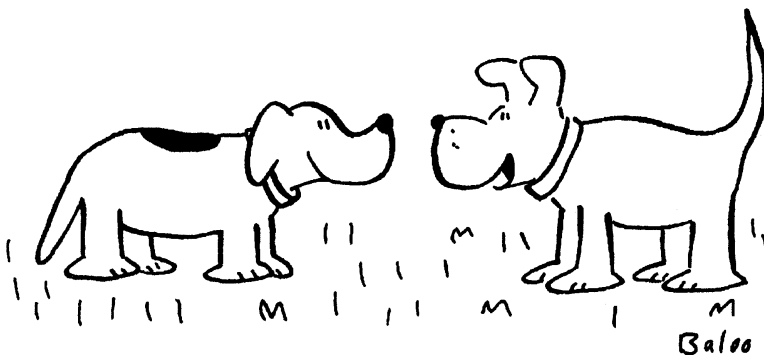
What she thought of her son's archetypal hero—a booze-guzzling anarchist outlaw tossing beer cans out of car windows—Lord only knows.

Young Ed left the farm for college, that great destroyer of man's spirit. He studied philosophy in New Mexico, and fell in love with many women and the untamed Southwest. He worked at a series of jobs, including park ranger and fire lookout, but his vocation was writing, and his Muse was to produce eight novels, seven essay collections, and five oversized coffee-table books.

His greatest achievement was the angry National Park Service memoir, *Desert Solitaire*, large chunks of which were written in a Death Valley cat-house. The book was acclaimed as a Thoreauvian masterpiece of naturalism and reflection upon its release in 1968, but the critics never quite knew what to make of Mr Abbey, and over time his ornery wit and scorn for liberal pieties alienated damn near everyone. The *New York Times* called him a "smirking pessimist"; *The Nation* averred that he was "puerile, arrogant, xenophobic, and dopey." To which Edward Abbey laughed, and replied, in his grand self-mythicizing Whitmanesque way, "Death before dishonor. Live free or die."

Abbey peppered *Desert Solitaire* with ill-tempered political opinions, adumbrating the themes that were to dominate his work. An American dictator, he wrote, would take the following steps:

- 1) Concentrate the populace in metropolitan masses so that they can be kept under close surveillance and where, in case of trouble, they can be bombed, burned, gassed or machine-gunned with a minimum of expense and waste.



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2) Mechanize agriculture to the highest degree of refinement, thus forcing most of the scattered farm and ranching population into the cities. Such a policy is desirable because farmers, woodsmen, cowboys, Indians, fishermen and other relatively self-sufficient types are difficult to manage unless displaced from their natural environment.

3) Restrict the possession of firearms to the police and the regular military organizations.

4) Encourage or at least fail to discourage population growth. Large masses of people are more easily manipulated and dominated than scattered individuals.

5) Continue military conscription. Nothing excels military training for creating in young men an attitude of prompt, cheerful obedience to officially constituted authority.

6) Divert attention from deep conflicts within the society by engaging in foreign wars; make support of these wars a test of loyalty, thereby exposing and isolating potential opposition to the new order.

7) Overlay the nation with a finely reticulated network of communications, airlines and interstate autobahns.

8) *Raze the wilderness.* Dam the rivers, flood the canyons, drain the swamps, log the forests, strip-mine the hills, bulldoze the mountains, irrigate the deserts and improve the national parks into national parking lots. (*Desert Solitaire*, p. 131)

Edward Abbey was a self-described agrarian anarchist who loved his country and hated its government. His anarchism was not simon-pure: he deplored mass migration—from any source—into the frontier Southwest, and in one notorious essay he urged the U.S. Border Patrol to "stop every campesino at our southern border, give him a handgun, a good rifle, and a case of ammunition, and send him home. He will know what to do with our gifts and good wishes. The people know who their enemies are." (*One Life at a Time, Please*, p. 44)

Such frank sentiments made Abbey a pariah. His travel pieces regularly appeared in the glossy magazines of prestige, but—like Gore Vidal, Murray Rothbard, Noam Chomsky, Thomas Fleming, Christopher Lasch, Abbey's arch-enemy Murray Bookchin, come to think of it pretty much any indepen-

dent thinker in this land of the free—his political musings were rarely found on the pages of our listless and servile press.

The novel that catapulted—well, nudged—Abbey to fame back in 1956 was *The Brave Cowboy*, a threnody for man in the age of mechanized totalitarianism. The hero is Jack Burns, an itinerant and prickly loner. Jack is a cowboy anachronism wandering through the 1950s, a man stubbornly apart, as this exchange with a police officer shows:

"No driver's license, no social security card, no discharge card, no registration card, no insurance card, no identification at all? . . . My god, he must have *something* on him! A man can't walk around without any I.D. at all? . . . Where're your papers?" he said.

"My what?"

"Your I.D.—draft card, social security, driver's license."

"Don't have none. Don't need none. I already know who I am." (*The Brave Cowboy*, p. 69)

Jack hears that an Albuquerque friend, Paul Bondi, has been jailed for refusing to register for the draft. So he does what any true friend would do: he gets himself tossed in prison so they can bust out together. Bondi—a philos-

Abbey's monkey wrenchers roamed the Southwest as Nature's avengers, pulling up survey stakes, disabling bulldozers, blowing up bridges, dreaming and plotting that glorious day when the Glen Canyon Dam is blasted to smithereens, to that big public works project in the sky.

ophy graduate student, no less—will have none of it. He is a meliorist. He explains to Jack why he plans to do his time, to submit:

"Don't think for a moment that I imagine myself as some sort of anarchist hero. I don't intend to fight against Authority, at least not in the open. When they tell us to say, 'I recant everything,' I'll just mumble

something out of the corner of my mouth. When they tell us to stand at attention and salute I'll cross the fingers of my left hand. When they install the dictaphones . . . and the wire-tapping apparatus and the two-way television I'll install defective fuses in the switchbox. When they ask me if I am now or ever have been an untouchable I'll tell them that I'm just a plain old easy-going no-account Jeffersonian anarchist. That way I should be able to muddle along . . ." (p. 104-5)

Jack escapes—alone—and flees on horseback to the mountains, pursued by police and army and the weaponry of modern technology. Fans of Western Lit have had a field day discussing what finally happens to Jack; in a twentieth anniversary edition of the book, Abbey made a critical deletion that belied, for the hundredth time, the "smirking pessimist" tag.

(*The Brave Cowboy* was made into a decent movie, *Lonely Are the Brave*, starring Kirk Douglas. Liberal Hollywood, fearless as ever, eliminated the thematically crucial matter of draft resistance.)

Perhaps Abbey's finest novel was his penultimate, *The Fool's Progress*, an autobiographical wandering—"an honest novel," as Abbey called it—across America, a summing up of sorts. There is a wonderful fictionalization of old Paul Revere Abbey: "Joe Lightcap thought he was the only Wobbly east of the Mississippi River. The only free-thinker in West Virginia. The only isolationist left in Shawnee County—a Republican county at that. Nobody paid him any attention and he knew it and the knowledge made him angry and lonely and sick in his heart. Joe Lightcap was not a philosopher; he took ideas seriously." (*The Fool's Progress*, p. 110)

Joe and his son Henry are blustery heretics, given to interrupting family picnics to complain about Roosevelt and bosses and the Good War. As Joe thunders, "The majority of Americans never wanted to get into this rotten war. And when Roosevelt maneuvered us into it, even after Pearl Harbor, the majority still never wanted to go overseas to fight. That's why the government needs the draft, Holyoak. Because there was no other way they could get our boys into it. They have to force them to fight." (*The Fool's*

Progress, p. 153)

He who does not love Joe Lightcap has no soul.

Abbey's most popular novel, 1975's *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, became the holy writ of the Earth First! movement, those tree-spiking apostles of ecotage. Abbey's monkey wrenchers roamed the Southwest, Nature's avengers, pulling up survey stakes, disabling bulldozers, blowing up bridges, dreaming and plotting that glorious day when the Glen Canyon Dam is blasted to smithereens, to that big public works project in the sky. (In *Hayduke Lives!*, a posthumous novel just published by Little Brown, the monkey wrenchers get one more crack at destroying the great pyramids of the Corps of Engineers.)

From the Life Imitates Art

Department: the Earth Firsters, living breathing counterparts of Abbey's band of merry anarchists, are the targets of a massive ongoing FBI investigation. As James Ridgeway and Bill Gifford perceptively noted, "in the lexicon of the American secret police, anarchists are worse than Communists." (*The Village Voice*, 7/25/89) Especially when the anarchists are gleeful saboteurs with no respect for government property.

Abbey dedicated *The Monkey Wrench Gang* to Ned Ludd, bless his anonymous soul, borrowing his epigraph from Byron: "Down with all kings but King Ludd." Now, unabashed Luddites are as rare as pantheists in America, at least on the public stage. One might expect them to be saturnine mopes, glum lamenters of modernity. Not these monkey-wrenchers. They copulate and play

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Salon: A Journal of Aesthetics, the only libertarian-oriented arts zine. 1 year (4 issues) \$10 to Pat Hartman, 305 W. Magnolia - Ste. 386, Ft. Collins, CO 80521.

cards and sleep under the stars, joyfully. Abbey's protagonists exult in life, live it with gusto and abandon. The sense of fun that courses through Abbey's prose is what really distinguishes him from the poet Robinson Jeffers, with whom he is often coupled.

Jeffers was a deeply misanthropic man who once wrote

I'd sooner, except the penalties,
kill a man than a hawk*

Abbey, in a cantankerous mood, might endorse that sentiment, but with a wink. Because for all his contempt for anthropocentrism, Edward Abbey enjoyed the company of bipeds, and even in his harshest diatribes a certain . . . well, love . . . for his fellows shines through, leavening the bitterness.

(Jeffers, like Abbey, was a nonconformist nonpareil. He was virtually excommunicated from the poetry Establishment in the 1940s when he opposed U.S. entry into the Second World War, not as an Ezra Poundian anti-Semite but as an old-fashioned isolationist America Firstster.)

Like most iconoclasts, Abbey enjoyed sniping, and occasionally his targets were kith and kin. He caught all sorts of hell for mocking the theological nature writing of Annie Dillard: "I sat on a rock in New Mexico once," Abbey kidded, "trying to have a vision. The only vision I had was of baked chicken." (*Washington Post*, 1/5/88, p. B2)

Yet if he chided the famous, he exhorted and inspirited his lesser-known brethren. "Ignore the critics," he wrote in the preface to *Slumgullion Stew*. "Have faith in the evidence of your senses and in your common sense. Be loyal to your family, your clan, your friends, and your community. Let the nation-state go hang itself." (p. xiv)

That wasn't the usual bullshit author gab. When in 1987 the operatives of the American Academy of Arts and Letters finally got around to recognizing the obstreperous Pride of Appalachia, Ed Abbey told 'em to fuck off. He had plans to run a river in Idaho that week, and that trip was far more important than receiving an empty award.

Abbey died of natural causes in March of 1989. With death imminent, * "Hurt Hawks," *Cawdor*, Robinson Jeffers, 1928.

his friends disconnected him from the machinery of life-support, wheeled him out of the hospital, and drove him into the desert. They chose a remote spot for his grave, guarded by coyotes and vultures. As his friend Edward Hoagland wrote, "the last smile that crossed Abbey's face" was when a comrade told him where he was to be buried. (*New York Times Book Review*, 5/7/89, p. 45)

At Abbey's raucous wake, a beery seminal bacchanal in Utah's Arches National Park, the Kentucky poet-

The Earth First!ers, living breathing counterparts of Abbey's band of merry anarchists, are the targets of a massive ongoing FBI investigation. As James Ridgeway and Bill Gifford perceptively noted, "in the lexicon of the American secret police, anarchists are worse than Communists."

farmer Wendell Berry spoke of Edward Abbey as an intransigent patriot, an authentic American hero. Said Berry, "Patriotism is not the love of air conditioning or the interstate highway system or the government or the flag or power or money or munitions. It is the love of country." (*Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, 5/23/89, p. 10)

True fact, Wendell. As Abbey used to say, "America: Love it or Leave it Alone."

Edward Abbey's popular success—his elevation to folk hero, all those dog-eared copies of *Desert Solitaire* and *The Monkey Wrench Gang* getting read and reread—is a rebuke to the go-along-to-get-along crowd, the hankerers for government appointment.

Thoreau understood. "If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves . . . and he will live with the license of a

higher order of beings." (*Walden*, 1854, p. 215)

So say what you mean. Do not dissemble. Do not wear what they tell you to wear, or think what they tell you to think. Do not apply for a job with Dan Quayle. Or Bill Bradley.

The contemporary movement for liberty sputters because it is so damned buttoned-down, so tailored and uptight. It has no room for poetry, for beer-drinking, for God. The cash nexus is all; ties of blood, of clan, of nature, are thin as thread.

Ed Abbey did not speak in measured, cautious equivocations, in Heritage-Brookings weasel words. He spoke the truth. To hell with fine-tuning the capital gains tax: "I feel rage and outrage quite often," he told the *Los Angeles Times* shortly before his death. "I'd gleefully take part in a violent revolution—I'd love to go down to city hall in Tucson and tear it down. I'm getting more radical as I get older." (*Washington Post*, 1/5/89, p. B2)

As we all should.

"I write to entertain my friends and to exasperate our enemies," Abbey once explained. "To oppose, resist, and sabotage the contemporary drift toward a global technocratic police state, whatever its ideological coloration . . . I write for the joy and exultation of writing itself. To tell my story." (*One Life at a Time, Please*, p. 177-8)

Ed Abbey told his story. And raised hell. And had fun. He loved his five wives, his kids, his parents, his buddies, his literary ancestors, and his country. He lived an American life, and as long as the Spirit of '76 endures, so will he. □

Select Bibliography:

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- Desert Solitaire*, University of Arizona Press, 1988 (reprint of 1968 ed.).
- Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness*, rev. ed., Gibbs Smith Pub., 1981.
- The Monkey Wrench Gang*, rev. ed., illus., Dream Garden, 1985.
- The Fool's Progress*, H. Holt & Co., 1988.
- Hayduke Lives!*, Little Brown, 1990.

Notes on Contributors

"Baloo" is the *nom de plume* of Rex F. May, whose cartoons appear in *The Wall Street Journal*, *National Review* and other periodicals.

R. W. Bradford is editor of *Liberty*.

Stephen Cox, a senior editor of *Liberty*, is Associate Professor of Literature, University of California, San Diego.

Brian Doherty is editorial assistant at *Liberty*.

Karl Hess, a senior editor of *Liberty*, is also the editor of *Libertarian Party News*. His most recent book is *Capitalism for Kids*.

Robert Higgs is Thomas F. Gleed Professor in the Albers School of Business, Seattle University, and the author of *Crisis and Leviathan*.

George M. Hollenback is an erstwhile Greek scholar who now works in the Safety/Security department of a major Houston hospital. He devotes his spare time to reading, writing, and photography.

Bill Kauffman is a writer whose novel, *Every Man a King*, has been both praised and reviled. Yet his heart remains full of love.

Bart Kosko, Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering at the University of Southern California, specializes in neural network research.

Richard Kostelanetz is a writer and artist living in New York. In the past month his articles have appeared in *Musical America*, *Connoisseur*, and *The New York Times*.

Loren E. Lomasky is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. He is the author of *Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community*.

Jim McClarin recently started the Walter Williams Boosters to promote George Mason University Economist Walter E. Williams and his ideas.

Gary S. Meade is an attorney who lives in Los Angeles.

Ronald E. Merrill is co-author of *The New Venture Handbook* and *Raising Money*, and author of *The Ideas of Ayn Rand*.

William P. Moulton studies antiquities, fossils and right-wing political ephemera.

Bob Ortin lives in southern Oregon.

Sheldon L. Richman is senior editor at the Institute for Humane Studies at George Mason University.

James S. Robbins is a doctoral candidate at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

Daniel Rosenthal is editor of *Gold & Silver Report*.

Brett Rutherford is a poet, composer, novelist, and consultant. A rare bird among mad poets, he is an atheist-humanist-rationalist-libertarian.

Jane S. Shaw is Senior Associate of the Political Economy Research Center of Bozeman, Montana.

Thomas S. Szasz is Professor of Psychiatry at the SUNY Health Science Center in Syracuse. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Heresies* and *Ceremonial Chemistry*.

Timothy Virkkala is assistant editor of *Liberty*.

Ethan O. Waters has never fought in a real war, but tries to make up for it with verbal battles.

Leland B. Yeager is Ludwig von Mises Professor of Economics at Auburn University.

Coming in the July *Liberty* . . .

Ayn Rand Talks Philosophy

Between 1960 and 1962, Ayn Rand and John Hospers talked philosophy on numerous occasions. Rand had finished her career as a novelist and was anxious to build her reputation as a philosopher. She took a keen interest in what Hospers, already an established philosopher, had to say. Rand learned a great deal about philosophy from Hospers, and Hospers learned a great deal from Rand. Hospers was virtually the only academic philosopher who influenced Rand during this crucial period in the development of Objectivism.

In this memoir, Hospers tells the story of his meetings with Rand, providing a unique perspective on the development of her thinking, plus the details of what it was like to get along with the flawed genius who had such an immense impact on libertarian thought.

Also

The Death of Socialism and the Triumph of Resentment, by Robert Sheaffer

The Butterfly Effect : The Libertarian Implications of Chaos Theory, by Richard W. Fulmer

And other reflections, essays, reviews, and humor

Terra Incognita

San Carlos, Calif.

How pet peeves can strain a relationship, as reported in the *Peninsula Times-Tribune*:

Acting on complaints from neighbors, police removed about 400 pet rats from the two-bedroom condo of Christina and Clifford Fields. The couple had brought three pet rats with them when they moved into the condo four months earlier.

The rats lived mostly in the bedrooms, or as Mrs Fields called them, the "boy-rat room" and the "girl-rat room." When asked how many rats slept with them on their folding couch in the living room, Mrs Fields replied "Well, a lot."

Mrs Fields told reporters that she and her husband "weren't getting along . . . he didn't appreciate the rats."

Olympia, Wash.

Evidence of high ethical standards required at American institutions of higher learning, as reported in the *Seattle Times*:

An investigation by the Board of Trustees of The Evergreen State College revealed that although Joseph Olander, the president of the institution, claimed in his resume to be a member of the Phi Beta Kappa honorary fraternity, but has never been a member; to have a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Maryland, but does not; to have a master's degree in English from Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida, but does not, that there was "no evidence of fraudulent misrepresentation of his academic background."

Texas

Interesting pre-election ritual from the Lone Star State, as reported in the *New York Times*:

In a closely fought race for governor, Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox boasted that he had personally attended 30 executions. Not to be outdone, former Governor Mark White, ran television advertisements featuring enlarged mug shots of criminals executed during his term of office.

Valparaiso, Chile

Interesting way to commemorate the transition from authoritarianism to democracy, as reported in the *Detroit Free Press*:

In Chile to attend the inauguration of President Patricio Aylwin, U.S. Vice President Dan Quayle purchased a souvenir "anatomically correct Indian statuette that displayed its virility when its head was pulled."

Italy

Evidence for the adage, "Some day my prince will come," as reported by the *Detroit News*:

The husband of Princess Caroline of Monaco was ordered to stand trial for draft evasion. In his application of exemption, he had claimed a "genital tumor" causing impotence. He and the Princess now have three children.

Columbus, Ohio

Progressive idea in the War Against Drugs, as reported by the *Lorain Journal*:

The Ohio State legislature is considering a measure that would require landlords to evict tenants who are "suspected of abusing drugs in the housing unit, even if the tenant hasn't been charged or convicted."

Jackson, Mich.

Progress in the science of jurisprudence in the Great Lake State, as reported by the *Detroit News*:

Rene Acuna was sentenced to life imprisonment for delivering and conspiring to deliver cocaine. The case against Mr Acuna consisted of the testimony of three police officers that they had seen him driving his Chevrolet Nova in the same neighborhood in which a group of five Cubans sold cocaine to an undercover police officer. His conviction was overturned by an appeals court, who noted that he "had no gun, no communication device or drugs in the car . . . was arrested without resistance and did not attempt to flee." The prosecuting attorney who tried the case announced he would oppose any attempt to free Acuna on bond while awaiting a new trial.

Honolulu, Hawaii

Weighty matters that command the attention of the legislative leaders of the Aloha State, as reported by the *Honolulu Advertiser*:

The Hawaii House of Representatives is considering a bill to appropriate \$101,000 for a "campaign to select a new state fish," to replace the humuhumunukunua'ua, whose four-year term as state fish ends June 8.

Olympia, Washington

Advance in criminal justice, as reported by the *Portland Oregonian*:

The Washington State Senate has passed a measure to allow the early release from prison of persons convicted of violent sexual offenses, provided the convicts agree to be castrated. "Mutilation is too good for these people," said Sen. Brad Owen. "It should be mandatory for these creeps," he added paradoxically.

New York

Perspicacious observation on the track record of Soviet communism, as reported by John Kenneth Galbraith, professor of economics at Harvard, former Ambassador to India, advisor to presidents, and author of several best-selling books on economics, from *The New Yorker*:

"One sees great material progress [in Moscow] in the appearance of solid well-being of the people on the streets, the close-to-murderous traffic, the incredible exfoliation of apartment houses."

Washington, D. C.

Advance in the science of penology, as reported by the *Honolulu Advertiser*:

By a 6-3 margin, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that it is constitutional for prison officials to force convicts to take mind-altering drugs, provided "fair procedures are used to determine when the drugging is proper."

Bar Harbor, Fla.

Insight into the American political process, as reported in the *Chicago Tribune*:

At the AFL-CIO winter meeting, Illinois State Treasurer sought the support of the union in his campaign for Secretary of State by promising, "I'm with labor whether they're right or wrong."

(Readers are encouraged to forward newspaper clippings or other documents for publication in *Terra Incognita*.)

Attend the

“Ludwig von Mises University”

The Ludwig von Mises Institute's O. P. Alford III Center again presents the ultimate Austrian economics week. At Stanford University in Palo Alto, California, from July 7-14, 1990, a 14-member Misesian department will teach under the direction of the leading Austrian economist in the world, Professor Murray N. Rothbard.

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For more information, write the Ludwig von Mises Institute, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama 36849, (205) 844-2500.



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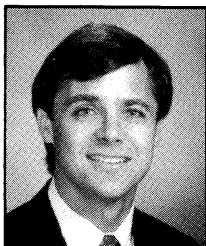
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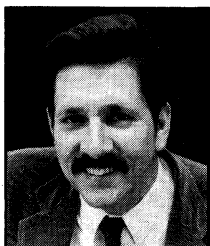
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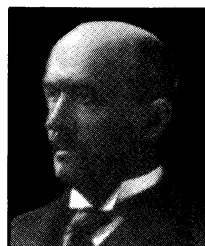
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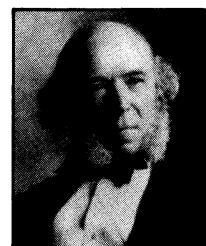
Jacob G. Hornberger



Richard M. Ebeling



William G. Sumner



Herbert Spencer

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By Jacob G. Hornberger

Founder and President, Future of Freedom Foundation

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By Richard M. Ebeling

*Ludwig von Mises Professor of Economics, Hillsdale College, and
Academic Vice-President, Future of Freedom Foundation*

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By Herbert Spencer

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"We Have Socialism, Q.E.D." — *By Milton Friedman*

FREE BONUS REPRINTS: "Ending Our Drug Nightmare" — *by Jarret B. Wollstein*; "Downside to the Drug War? Nation's Liberties at Risk — Tough Measures Put Fourth Amendment Rights in Jeopardy" — *by John Dillon*, staff writer of the *Christian Science Monitor*; and "Making Drugs Legal Will End So-Called War" — *by Virginia Postrel*, editor, *Reason Magazine*.

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