The Voluntaryist

Whole Number 33 *"If one takes care of the means, the end will take care of itself."* **August 1988**

BOOK REVIEW:

Vladimir Bukovsky, **TO CHOOSE FREEDOM**, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987. (Published originally in French and Russian in 1981.)

By Carl Watner

Voluntaryists can take heart that a book like TO CHOOSE FREEDOM has been written. First, it is encouraging to learn that a man with Mr. Bukovsky's ideas has survived Soviet Russia without compromising himself, even under the most trying conditions. Secondly, the author's experiences bear out the importance of the voluntaryist insight-that power depends on the sanction and willing cooperation of the victim. This, Bukovsky's newest book, is comprised of four lengthy essays, an Epilogue, and two short articles forming an Appendix. The first three essays are of a particular interest to voluntaryists.

Born at the beginning of World War II, Vladimir Bukovsky spent his first thirty-five years in the Soviet Union. Nearly eleven of those years were spent in prisons, labor camps, and psychiatric hospitals. In his first book, TO BUILD A CASTLE—MY LIFE AS A DISSENTER, he described how his dissident philosophy was formed. In numerous conversations with like-minded friends, he and they came to the conclusion that they must resist the regime without slowly becoming the likeness of their adversaries. To answer violence with violence, would only multiply violence; to answer lies with lies would never bring them closer to the truth. Bukovsky and his group of friends realized that the answer was to be found in the voluntaryist insight:

> the great truth was that it was not rifles, not tanks, and not atom bombs that created power, nor upon them that power rested. Power depended upon public obedience, upon a willingness to submit... .(C)itizens who were fed up with terror and coercion should simply refuse to acknowledge them. The point about dealing with the Communists is that to acknowledge the reality of life they have created and to assent to their notions means **ipso facto** to become bandits, informers, hangmen, or silent accomplices. Power rests on nothing other than people's consent to submit, and each person who refuses to submit to tyranny reduces it by one two-hundred-and-fifty-millionth, whereas each who compromises only increases it. (TO BUILD A CASTLE, pp. 33, 240)

In short, the dissidents understood that the power to rule did not grow from the barrel of a gun. Rather, it is created by people who are ready to comply with their ruler's demands. From this, they deduced that if the people were to withdraw their compliance, the authorities would be deprived of their power. Even though the dissidents understood this, they did not expect the Soviet regime to disband when they began their protests and noncooperation. Rather, they were concerned with how they would be judged as individuals by future generations. Would they be considered even partly responsible, for the tyranny and oppression that took place in the Soviet Union, or would they be viewed as individuals who by word and deed had resisted the State? Until this time, only one group in Russia had consistently opposed the State. The true (Russian) Orthodox faithful did not recognize the Soviets and considered them to be the work of the devil. They would have nothing to do with the State. They refused to work for the Soviets, read the newspapers, listen to the radio, touch official documents, and in the presence of public officials and investigators, made the sign of the cross -"out of my sight, Beelzebub!" They were made to suffer much because of their beliefs, and in the few instances when they were released from jail, they lived off what they could earn from private individuals.

Everyone else was in one way or another "implicated in the crimes of the regime:" everyone worked for government enterprises, reinforcing the system and creating its wealth. ("The Soul of Man Under Socialism," p. 39) Even those who philosophically opposed the State were strengthening the system by supporting it. Bukovsky found that there were many elaborate theories of justification and submission, ranging from:

> No man can flay a stone.
>
> What can I do alone? (If everyone acted, so would I.)
>
> If I didn't, someone else would. (And better me because I'll do less harm.)
>
> You must make compromises, concessions, and sacrifices...
>
> We must live for Russia, the Communists will one day disappear by themselves. (This argument is a favorite with scientists and the military.)
>
> We must live for posterity, create the eternal values of science and culture; a trivial preoccupation with protests merely distracts us from the main thing.
>
> Never protest openly; that is a provocation which merely enrages the authorities and brings suffering on the innocent...
>
> To protest about details is merely to expose oneself. The thing to do is to lie low. Then when the decisive moment comes, okay. But in the meantime, we'll disguise ourselves.
>
> Yes, but now is the worst possible time; my wife's pregnant, my children are ill, I have to defend my thesis first, my son's about to go to the university...(and so on till the end of a lifetime.)
>
> The worse things get, the better. We must deliberately take all the system's idiocies to their logical and ridiculous conclusion, until the people's patience runs out and they understand what is happening...
>
> The people are silent. What gives a handful of malcontents the right to speak out-whom do they represent, whose opinions are they expressing?...
>
> You have to get on quietly with your career, get to the top, and try to change things from there; you won't achieve anything from the bottom.
>
> You have to gain the trust of the leaders' advisers and teach and educate them on the quiet, there's no other way of influencing the government's course.
>
> You protest; I'll stay out of it. Someone has to survive to bear witness.
>
> ("The Soul of Man Under Socialism," p. 40)

The dissidents took the position that every one of these reasons was simply a rationalization for collaborating with the regime. The Soviet state didn't give a tinker's damn how anyone justified his or her submission. It didn't matter what a person thought so long as they obeyed.

What did the dissident movement suggest as an alternative? They agreed that it was necessary to shatter the internal excuses by which they justified their complicity. This presupposed a core of freedom in each individual,"a subjective sense of right," as one of the dissidents expressed it. Looking at their situation this way, Bukovsky became conscious of his personal responsibility, "which meant, in effect, that he possessed an inner freedom," to decide whether or not to cooperate with the Soviets at all. Given that he controlled himself, "it followed that passivity or

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Editor: Carl Watner

Subscription Information

Published bi-monthly by **The Voluntaryists,** P.O. Box 1275, Gramling, SC 29348. Subscriptions are $15 for six issues. Overseas subscriptions, please add $5 (per year) for extra postage. Please check the number on your mailing label to see when you should renew. *No reminders will be sent!* Back issues $3 each.

Potpourri From the Editor's Desk

1. "You can't shoot a truth."

"A fundamental limit of violence is that none of us has the power to force another person to believe or live out our truth. We can force some people to do our will, but we can force no one to believe in our truth. In terms of truth, violence doesn't work. People will always believe what they choose to believe, not what we choose for them. They will react against any truth of ours imposed on them." [Jim Douglass,"But What Is The Question?" GROUND ZERO, Fall 1987, p. 10]

2. Another Research Topic

In "War and the Birth of the Nation State," [33 JOURNAL OF ECONOMIC HISTORY (1973),pp. 203-221], Richard Bean notes that military expenditures accounted for approximately six percent of national income during the era of the Roman Empire. In Medieval Europe it was only about one percent, over two percent in the 16th Century, and averaged nine percent in the 18th Century. "The actual figure has been about ten percent in the United States since World War II." It would be interesting to update and extend this analysis.

3. Self-ownership: "Yourself belongs to you!"

A rap song by the Fat Boys has the following lines:

Take any path you want to
but one thing you ought-a Know
Don't let others lead you places
you don't want to go!
A def thing to remember
if you don't Know what to do:
You got a right to standing tall,
Yourself belongs to you!

[from Marlo Thomas and Friends, FREE TO BE ... A FAMILY, New York: Bantam Books, p. 126]

4. LETTERS TO JESSICA: A Child's Guide to Freedom of Mind and Spirit.

Robert Bissett has written a meaningful tract explaining statism and why the State is a fabrication of the human imagination. Lesson 3, "True Faith and Allegiance—To Whom Is It Owed?" concludes with this important lesson:

> I have said that wolf-men and humbugs [Bissett's designation for politicians and bureaucrats] may force you to do things you know to be wrong or things you would rather not do. I have said that humbugs have claimed total power in America just as they have all over the world. But this is only true in the fantasy world of human government. The truth is that no one has the power to make you do anything. You always have a choice. It may be a very hard choice, but you do always have a choice.
>
> Rather than kill others in time of war as required by man-made law, some men have refused and chose to go to prison. No one had the power to force them to aim a rifle and pull the trigger. The same is true for you and me. No one can make us do anything. No one controls us, not even God who made us... .
>
> Little children understand they are free, too, without anyone telling them. Patty is three years old. She is a very nice little girl, but when I tell her to do things she puts her hands on her hips and says: "You're not my mother." She means I have no authority over her. That's true for me and all other adults. It will still be true when she grows up. Patty was created with this truth inside of her, just as we all were. [p.76] [Available from the author for $6 cash at HCR 61 215A, Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805]

5. "Harry's War"

The anti-IRS movie video by this title is worth seeing. Beverly Payne (portrayed by Geraldine Page), Harry's aunt, is audited by the Internal Revenue Service and assessed over $100,000 in back taxes. After she dies of a heart attack in Tax Court, Harry takes over her affairs and discovers that his newly inherited property has been seized by the IRS. He proceeds to fight them in a paramilitary struggle, while attempting to publicize his plight.

Funny, and often hilarious, though dealing with a serious subject, "Harry's War" nevertheless has a flawed thesis. The script writer did not understand that taxation is theft, and believes that if the IRS collected taxes in a constitutional manner no one would have anything to grumble about and no injustice would be done. But the story of Harry's war against the IRS demonstrates that all statist law, no matter how petty, has as its ultimate punishment death or property confiscation, or both (should one choose to resist). Available on VHS or Beta. It was produced in 1980, and also stars David Ogden Stiers, Edward Herrmann,and Karen Grassle.

6. "Threat of Bureaucratic Arrest"

"Technically, the bureaucrat never does any of the dirty work for the prosecution of his rulings. He will eventually get a local court and local deputy sheriff to enforce his edicts. Notice, that if you ever resist bureaucratic 'law', you are not prosecuted for resisting an inane and unconstitutional law, but for 'defying the court' or 'resisting arrest'. Separating the act of resistance from the initial law which motivated the act is one of the slickest ways to bring a populace into line with bureaucratic law. It also allows jurists to justify harsh and serious penalties (for resisting arrest) which wouldn't be justifiable because of failing to get a building permit, for example. When law becomes sacrosanct without regard to its moral implications, then men begin to defend all types of crimes because they are clothed in the mantle of 'law'...

"Whenever a deputy comes to enforce a court order that is against your religious or other philosophical convictions, instruct him that you will only comply if he threatens your life with his weapon drawn. This is not to indicate that you plan on threatening him, but to make local deputies feel the full personal responsibility they share in being 'lackies' for the State, and the ridiculousness of his enforcement of petty edicts with the threat of force. This procedure also helps them understand that all law, no matter how petty, has as its ultimate punishment your death (should you choose to resist). All legislators ought to ask themselves, before passing any law, if this law is worth killing a person who resists." [Joel Skousen, THE SURVIVAL HOME MANUAL, 2nd edition, 903 State Street, Hood River, Oregon 97031, $22 postpaid, p. 77]

7. "Government by Fiction: The Idea of Representation"

This article, by Edmund Morgan, originally appeared in the Spring 1983 YALE REVIEW, pp.321-339. While Morgan does not deprecate the concept of representative government, per se, he makes a number of telling points regarding the evolution of political representation and its mythical nature. In view of Lysander Spooner's observation that if consent means anything it means the individual consent of each and every person subject to governmental jurisdiction, it is interesting to read about early Maryland history, where representatives,at first, did not represent those who voted against them. The following paragraphs are excerpts from Morgan's article.

> Government requires make-believe. Make believe that the king is divine or that he can do no wrong, make believe

that the voice of the people is the voice of God. Make believe that the people have a voice or that the representatives of the people are the people. Make believe that governors are the servants of the people. ...

Although fictions enable the few to govern the many, it is not only the many who are constrained by them. In the strange commingling of political make-believe and reality the governing few, no less than the governed many, may find themselves limited...by the fictions on which their authority depends. ...

Representation from the beginning was a fiction. If the representative consented, his constituents had to make believe that they had done so.

The way in which any group of subjects was first persuaded to pretend that one of them could substitute for all of them is not altogether clear. It is possible that originally a representative could consent only in the name of individuals who specifically empowered him and that those who did not, even though in the same community, were not bound by his actions. (For example, in the Maryland General Assembly of 1638), the records show that some free men attended in person while others delegated their representatives, each of whom was entitled to his own vote and also to all the votes of those who had selected him as their representative. **He did not represent anyone who had not specifically and individually empowered him; and a man could even change his mind, revoke the assignment of his vote, and attend in person.** (emphasis added)...The records imply that elections of representatives were held in particular neighborhoods, but those who voted against the winner were not bound to recognize him as their representative. ...

In the 1640's the assembly was gradually reduced to a strictly representative body, with each community in the (Maryland) colony choosing, by majority rule, a representative who would stand for the whole community, including the minority of free men who had voted against him. And he would cast a single vote in the assembly, regardless of the size of the community he represented.

It is not certain that the original development of the fiction of representation in England followed this pattern. What seems clear is that when representatives ceased to be mere proxies for individuals, whether in England or America, they represented distinct geographically defined communities. ...

What was needed was not that every man, woman, and child share in the choice of a representative but that the choice be perceived as that of a geographical community. A representative had to represent the people of a particular place; he ceased to represent when he lost his local identification. ...The fiction would collapse if it was stretched to have all representatives chosen by all voters. ... The local character of representation was present at the beginning in England as well as in England's colonies, and it has remained to this day essential to the credibility of the fiction. ...

(T)he fictional purpose of representation (was) to persuade the many to accept the government of the few. ...

8. "Legislation"

"Legislation is not the result of consensus. If there was a consensus, there would be no need for legislation. Legislation represents civil war." (Leonard Liggio quoted in the 1988 calendar of the Free Libertarian Party of Ontario)

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silence in the face of a crime that one had witnessed were forms of collaboration with the criminals." (TO CHOOSE FREEDOM, p. 87) Thus it came about that the dissidents didn't play politics, "didn't compose programs for the liberation of the people," and didn't found unions. Their sole weapon was publicity. "Not propaganda but **publicity**, so that no one could say afterward: I didn't know."

> The rest depended on each individual's conscience. Neither did we expect victory—there wasn't the slightest hope of achieving it. But each of us craved the right to say to our descendants: "I did all that I could. I was a citizen. I fought for the observance of law and never went against my conscience." (TO BUILD A CASTLE, p. 277)

In Chapter 1, "On Public Opinion and Publicity," Bukovsky points out that totalitarian regimes are extremely sensitive to public opinion, "although they go to great pains to hide this fact." (p. 17) Realizing that they are in fact usurpers, such States look to the outside world to provide moral reinforcement to their very existence. Being accepted as a member of the world-wide, nation-state community adds to their domestic legitimacy. Every tyrant tries to get his regime recognized internationally because it adds to his stature within his own country. Bukovsky concludes that the Western nation-states should never have recognized the communist States. Nor should Westerners (especially businessmen) have supported these regimes with technology, credit or tools. Despite this astute view, Bukovsky fails to comprehend that the Western political States, themselves, are lawless gangs of bandits, who use the existence of other nation-states, such as the Soviet Union, to justify their own existence.

The second chapter, "On Liberty," focuses on the difference between inner or spiritual freedom, and external liberty,the physical absence of coercion. In answer to the question, "To what extent was I freer in the West?" Bukovsky replies that he was as free imprisoned in a Russian jail as he was in England. He writes that freedom is not a geographical concept whose border ends at the Berlin wall or begins at Plymouth Rock. Rather, inner freedom is the ability to exercise self-control and act on the decisions that we each make. Freedom is something that we all can possess if we choose it. "(W)ho can say there is no freedom of choice in prison? It is possible to buy one's way out with a betrayal. One can try to escape. One can grovel to gain a pittance. One can resist. In prison, finally, one can acquire inner freedom."(p. 98) In a very poignant demonstration of inner freedom, Bukovsky describes a work strike in a Soviet labor camp, where prisoners decided it was shameful to contribute their labor to strengthen a system of universal oppression. For this, they were placed in punishment cells and in solitary confinement. Each one of them knew that they could only depend on themselves: "If I don't do it, who will? and when will I do it, if not today?" Meanwhile, a West German businessman was explaining that if he didn't sell pipeline sections to the Soviet Union, the 1500 workers in his factory would have to be laid off. "Tell me, who is more free in this case?" Bukovsky asks. (p. 98)

The theme of the third chapter is capitalism and socialism. Noting that he has yet to discover any capitalism in the West, Bukovsky asserts that for all practical purposes socialism is already fully established in Western Europe and the United States. It is merely the traditional use of the word "capitalism" to designate the economic/political system of the West, which masks the reality of the situation. "The process of socialization is advancing with an unbelievable speed, for socialism has become an integral part of the Western mentality. It has become part of the tissue of the modern world." (p. 114)

Bukovsky apparently has a firm grasp of the importance of property rights based on his experiences in the Soviet Union. He notes that even though the regime has exterminated millions of kulaks and continues to physically persecute those who exercise their yearnings for private property, it has failed in its objective of extinguishing the desire to possess material goods. "The Soviet experiment has resulted in the astonishing discovery that the desire for things and possessions is not a mere material need, but a deep spiritual one. For the majority of people, ownership is a means of self-expression." (p. 123) Bukovsky concludes that the only difference between socialist Russia and the capitalist West is that socialism was introduced about 20 years earlier in Russia and that the West has not physically exterminated its real producers. Might this be the only difference between Eastern and Western socialism?

One of the major problems with both creeping and advanced socialism is that it develops a parasitic attitude among the

population. People come to expect "a right to a job" or to "unemployment benefits." "Society is to blame, not me!" "It is as if people have lost trust in their own sense of duty and justice, in their ability to solve their own problems." (p. 124) People do lose all sense of personal responsibility, when as in the Soviet Union, the State is always right and the individual always wrong. State permission must first be granted before anything can be done. A person is not "innocent until proven guilty," but rather guilty until his actions are approved by the State. I don't believe Bukovsky realizes how closely we are approaching this situation in the United States. Here the State already requires birth certificates, building permits, zoning permits, occupational licenses, driver's licenses, tax forms, etc. We are rapidly reaching the point where the State has all the power and the individual none.

Bukovsky does realize, however, that in the West, "(i)f an individual attempts to stand on his own two feet and regain his autonomy, he will have to overcome great difficulties." (p. 127) What obstacles does he identify? Bukovsky sees the State, "that monster with a thousand heads," robbing the individual until he virtually becomes dependent on it. How does the State do this? Bukovsky accuses the IRS of depriving the individual of self-support: "In the West,the role of the Soviet KGB is in part taken over by the gigantic agency in charge of taxation, with which anyone who earns his own living is in almost constant warfare. The issue is not money so much as keeping one's independence, an idea profoundly offensive to socialism." (p. 127)

We ought to look at this last sentence again: **"the issue is not money so much as keeping one's independence."** This is a very important point. The destruction of wealth via taxation, and the roadblocks thrown in the way of accumulating wealth by the modern State, serve its purposes well. A citizen who has no "nest egg" to fall back on, or who is dependent on the State for his subsistence is likely to be far more compliant and obedient than the person who is self-sufficient and has accumulated some reserves for hard times. To illustrate how seriously he takes this issue, Bukovsky writes that if he lived in Sweden, he undoubtedly would have been placed in prison because he would object to his taxes being used to support communist organizations. (In Sweden, tax money funds all political parties.) It is one thing to tolerate their existence, but "quite another to have to finance them from one's pocket."

> This I would absolutely refuse to do, even at the risk of being hanged. It is a question of principle for me not to take part in a wrong when that wrong is perfectly evident. This principle cost me twelve years in Soviet prisons, and I suspect that it would keep me permanently inside Swedish ones. (p. 128)

To take the stands for principle which Bukovsky has taken requires tremendous courage and unflinching integrity. To stand alone requires enormous self-confidence and willingness to accept the consequences of one's actions. As Bukovsky wrote in TO BUILD A CASTLE, "With his back to the wall a man understands ... there is nowhere for him to retreat. The instinct for self preservation drives him to extremes-he prefers physical death to spiritual death." (p. 249) However, the fact that Bukovsky is still writing and speaking out is proof that the truth will somehow always win out. We can take heart that Bukovsky and others like him share the heroic attitude of Ludwig von Mises, who noted in his own NOTES AND RECOLLECTIONS:

> Again and again I faced situations from which rational deliberations could find no escape. But then something unexpected occurred that brought deliverance. I would not lose courage even now. I would do everything...(I) could do. I would not tire in professing what I knew to be right....I regret only my willingness to compromise, not my instransigence.

Other Writings of Vladimir Bukovsky

TO BUILD A CASTLE—MY LIFE AS A DISSENTER, New York: The Viking Press, 1977.

"The Soul of Man Under Socialism," COMMENTARY, January 1979.

"A Conversation with Vladimir Bukovsky," Held on June 12, 1979, Washington, D. C. American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1979.

Letter to the Editor:

Dear Carl,

After reading your article, "I Don't Want 'Nothing' From Him," as well as your introduction to the excerpt ("The Day the World Was Lost") from Milton Mayer's book, THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE FREE (both appeared in THE VOLUNTARYIST, No. 31, April 1988), I had some strong emotional reactions. In these articles, I felt that you were going too far with right and wrong in saying that it is wrong to use State services or swear an oath to the State—even though we (and the chemical engineer in the book) are in danger of having physical violence directed against us by the State.

My first thoughts after reading your articles were these: Issues of ethics and right vs. wrong change under the threat of physical violence. For example, if I am a bank teller it is normally (i.e. in a free world) wrong for me to give a third party the bank's money unless they have a right to it, based on some kind of agreement between them and the bank. However, if a robber puts a gun to my head and orders me to give them all of the money in my drawer, I would be a fool not to. And, no court would or should convict me for choosing the lesser of two evils in this case (saving my life, even though this involves contributing to a crime). It seemed clear to me when reading THEY THOUGHT THEY WERE FREE that the chemical engineer and the teacher made a major mistake when they didn't leave Germany early on. Once they decided to stay, they really did have to choose between the lesser of two evils. I do agree that all their choices were bad ones and there was a price to pay for each "bad" choice that they made (in this case the engineer lost some of his integrity and self-worth when he swore the oath), but I would not go so far as to say that they made the "wrong" choice by lying in order to save their lives. It is not a matter of right and wrong, as I see it; it is a matter of choice — and all choices are bad ones when they are made under the threat of violence.

The other point I disagreed with you on is when you said in your article that it was wrong to use government services, or to have anything to do with the government. It seems to me that it is impossible to have nothing to do with the government, unless one is willing to either die or be imprisoned. To me, that seems like asking a slave to have nothing to do with the slave owner—take no money, no food, no clothes—in essence—to die. Again, I believe that libertarian principles under laws of natural rights should be based on the individual's long-term self-interest, and it is rarely in one's self interest to die. One may choose to die or go to prison rather than to buckle under and lose self-respect—but it is a matter of choice, not right and wrong, and each of us must make this choice for ourselves. Along this same line, I didn't agree that taking money back from the government is wrong. For reasons which you mentioned, I agree that it is better to have as little to do with government as we can. For example, it decreases the government's hold on us both physically and psychologically if we don't take social security, medicare, government loans, etc.—and it enhances one's feelings of independence and self-esteem. However, I do not believe it is wrong to take back money that the government takes from us—as long as we don't take back more than that. Pat Cullinane's example of the gypsies seems to me to have two flaws. 1) Her example implied that the person went along with the gypsies' plans to steal more silverware in order to collect enough to pay her back. It is clearly wrong for a person to voluntarily contribute to or participate in any future theft for whatever reason. 2) The gypsies in the story stole silverware—not money. It seems to me that money needs a somewhat different analysis, since money is not in itself wealth, but a medium of exchange for wealth.

An example I came up with to make these issues clearer in my own mind was that of train robbers, who had robbed four trains in the last year. During the last train robbery, they robbed people in the back of the train, where upon they lost that money because it accidentally blew out of an open window. Then they robbed the people in the front of the train. However, as they exit the train, an enforcement agency stops them from leaving, takes the money they just stole, and send the robbers to jail. Now—

how do they return the money to the victims of the robbery? First, I imagine they would give identifiable property (rings, watches, etc.) back to the rightful owner. But what do they do with the money? Do they say they can't give the money back, because they might give the wrong serial numbers back to some people? It seems that they clearly wouldn't say this, because giving people the identical bills they had would not be important—it would only be important to give them an equivalent amount of money (or an amount as close to this as possible). Do they say that only the people on the front of the train get their money back, because the money collected from those on the back of the train all blew out the window? It seems to me that they would try to prorate the money among, at least, all the people on that particular train. I'm not sure how far back in time they would go in prorating the stolen money—maybe among all four trains—maybe not—but it seems to need a deeper analysis than Pat Cullinane's example, where not money, but property which was clearly identifiable, was stolen.

I became so caught up in these questions, that I reread George Smith's articles on "The Ethics of Voting" and "Party Dialogue" that he wrote for The Voluntaryists when you first started the newsletter. In these articles, he talked about institutional analysis and vicarious liability. He concluded that the institution of government was evil or criminal, and that it was wrong for a libertarian anarchist to voluntarily participate in or contribute to criminal behavior. Thus, it was wrong for a libertarian anarchist to voluntarily participate in or contribute to the government. However, he said, if one is coerced or threatened with punishment by government, it is a matter of personal choice, not right and wrong, whether one decides to disobey the State (by not paying taxes, etc.) and take the punishment, or to allow one's self to continue to be coerced by the State and not take the risk of punishment. This reinforced my own conclusions. Or, more accurately, I probably got my own ideas on the subject largely from him, since his arguments and ideas are the ones which brought me into the libertarian movement to begin with. By the way, he also stated that there were gray areas of right and wrong such as working for defense plants, etc. and that libertarians needed to do more work on this area of libertarian theory.

These questions are very important ones, and I agree with George that more theoretical analysis needs to be done in this area. There are many gray areas, and I, for one, wrestle with such questions constantly. For example, I send my children to public schools, because I can't afford to pay the government taxes, and then send them to private schools. It seems better to me to send them to public schools than no school at all. But I go into the classrooms twice a week to help my children, along with their classmates, read or do phonics. I ask myself—is this wrong—even though it seems to clearly help my children—because I am contributing to the institution of government. I, also, sometimes, voluntarily give the school money to buy extra workbooks, computers, etc. for the kids. I ask myself—is this wrong? I go back and forth—I don't know. I feel that I am making such choices without sufficient evidence.

Signed
A Long Time Subscriber

My response was as follows:

I'm sorry you interpreted my article in such a way as to conceive that I was condemning anyone or going too far with right and wrong in saying that it is "wrong" to use State services or swear an oath to the Constitution. It seems to me that our discussion proceeds on two levels. First, given that we start with certain principles which we presumably share (self-ownership, nonaggression) we have to determine the implications of these principles for our lives. This is an intellectual argument that should proceed independent of the difficulty or ease with which we can implement it. Thus, the implementation is the second level of the discussion. What I am saying is that we should be able to agree upon the consistency or inconsistency of certain courses of action with our starting principles (this is the first level of the discussion). How and to what extent we are able to integrate these intellectual conclusions in our own lives constitutes the second level of discussion. This is the area that you refer to as a matter of personal choice.

Thus I believe that we should at least be able to intellectually agree that swearing an oath to the Constitution or taking money from the State is inconsistent with libertarian principles. Since we are not physically coerced into doing some of these things, in the sense of maintaining consistency, I believe it is hypocritical to engage in them. So while it may be a matter of personal choice, it is also a matter of recognizing what is "right and wrong". I am not attempting to impose my standards of right and wrong on anyone, since I believe that justice is inevitable and that they will naturally suffer the consequences of their actions.

You begin your analysis of my article by recounting the justification of a bank teller in handing over money to a thief, rather than risk losing her life resisting a hold-up man. You state that some issues of right and wrong change under the threat of violence. Some may, but others don't. Unless you refuse to draw the line somewhere, violence or its threat could drive you to do most anything (i.e., the situation of doctors in concentration camps who were forced to 'experiment' on inmates or the situation of a hostage who is threatened with his own murder if he does not himself murder someone else—see the articles on "A Moral Riddle?" in THE VOLUNTARYIST a few issues back). If you are a person with a backbone and integrity, then I think you have to admit that there are some things that you would not do, even if you were to lose your life if you did not do them. I, for one, would hope that I would have enough courage to refuse to murder another innocent person, even if I were to lose my own life in the process.

We are between a rock and a hard place when it comes to the State, because even if we resist or die (in the process) we do not necessarily avoid entanglement. Jails are statist holding grounds, and death requires an official statist certificate. We should not let the State dictate our choices, if we can avoid it. For example, you state that your choice (since you cannot afford to both pay taxes and the tuition for a private school) is public school or no school at all. Isn't teaching your children at home a possibility?

I wrote in the Dec. '87 VOLUNTARYIST:"Difficult as it is to totally divorce ourselves from the State, each one of us must draw the line for him or herself as to how and to what extent we will deal with statism, whether it be driving on government roads, paying federal income taxes, using government 'funny' money, or the post office." You might want to look over the rest of the article on "What Is Our Plan?" But my point is, unless we are to be unprincipled wimps and give our advocacy of libertarianism no meaning, we must draw the line somewhere. We must be prepared to break the "law" some time when we feel the situation serious enough, otherwise we might just as well forget our principles. I agree that such civil disobedience is a case of personal choice, but if we have individual standards of right and wrong for ourselves (as I believe we do and must) then it also involves our determining what is "right and wrong." That does not mean, however, that I condemn you or anyone else. It is a matter for your personal conscience—a decision you have to live with.

I don't think that money, as a medium of exchange, changes the picture of restitution at all. The principles of property title transfer don't change because money, rather than an actual commodity, is exchanged. Granted that it may be more difficult to identify the actual property in question, but this doesn't change the fact that a specific piece of stolen property still belongs to its original owner. The passengers who had their money blown out of the thieves' hands should certainly not be partially reimbursed out of the proceeds of what was stolen from another group of passengers.

Thanks for writing. I believe our readers will profit from our exchange of thoughts.

Sincerely,
Carl

Voluntary Musings
A Column of Iconoclasms

By Charles Curley

"Nothing can defeat an idea
-- except a better one."
-- Eric Frank Russell

The Federal Budget Follies Congress, in its inimitable style, has made a few contributions to reducing the Federal budget deficit. In the budget resolution (speaking of truth in labeling...), numerous idiocies were inflicted upon the long-suffering American taxpayer. For example:

* $6.4 million for a Bavarian-style ski resort in Idaho, provided a similar amount comes from other sources.
* $15.5 million to improve roads in New Mexico that might be used to transport nuclear waste. "Might" makes right?
* $350,000 to clean up the faces of four politician's images graven on the side of Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota.
* $250,000 to prevent wild pigs from attacking exotic plants in Hawaii.
* $8 million for schools for North African Jews in Paris. The budget resolution declares them refugees in spite of the fact that they have been in Paris at least ten years, and they are not classified as refugees by either the French government, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, or the U.S. State Department.

This last one was introduced by Senator Inouye of Hawaii, who asserts that it is "outrageous" to suggest that he supported the appropriation just because a board member of Ozar Hatorah, Mr. Zev Wolfson, contributed $1000 to Inouye's last campaign. "I don't solicit money. I don't have to," said the Senator.

I am not making these up, folks!

But a bit more serious is an observation by I.F. Stone in THE NATION for 31 October, 1987. He makes the following comment:

"But if you set aside interest on the debt, entitlements (like Social Security and Medicare and the great untouchable of 'defense,' which is really the cost of maintaining empire,) even shutting down the rest of the government entirely wouldn't erase this year's deficit. The total bill for all departments other than defense as proposed in the Reagan budget for 1988 is almost $118 billion. The 1988 deficit is now projected to be $185 billion. So you could abolish civil government altogether and still be $67 billion in the red."

For all my dislike of the Federal system, I had not realized that it was that bad.

Worth Quoting

"Yelen, I agree that governments are a form of deception — though not necessarily for the rulers, who usually benefit from them. Most of the citizens, most of the time, must be convinced that the national interest is more important than their own. To you, this must seem like an incredible piece of mass hypnotism, backed up by the public disciplining of dissenters."

Vernor Vinge
MAROONED IN REALTIME

Calling the Kettle Black You have, of course, heard that those fiendish samurai businessmen are dumping their products on the American market, with total disregard for the livelihood of millions of American workers. In fact you can probably repeat the litany as well as I can, even working in Silicon Valley as I do.

Meanwhile, the U.S. has been dumping rice and sugar in Haiti for a number of years, making it impossible for anyone to grow either crop locally. The fields are brown with unharvested cane and the rice paddies lie fallow. This in a country where the GNP per capita is $310 a year, between Kenya's $290 and Ghana's $380.

Dumping is defined as selling across international boundaries a good or service for less than it costs to produce. The term implies some sort of government subsidy. In domestic economics, it is known as a price war. In anti-trust economics, it is known as unfair competition. In marketing it is known as having a "loss leader."

Notice that consumers benefit, while ultimately the producers pay for it. As far as I am concerned the Japanese are welcome to "dump" all the chips, VCRs, or whatever, they like. But were I a Japanese taxpayer, I might feel otherwise.

Speaking of sugar market manipulations, did you know that U.S. farms subsidies extend as far as Panama, where the U.S. pays 18 cents per pound instead of the world market price of 11 cents?

Man Bites God "Our government is a branch of Mohammed's absolute vice-regency....It takes precedence over all religious practices such as prayer, fasting or the Haj pilgrimage. I openly say that the government can stop any religious law if it feels it is correct to do so. The ruler can close or destroy the mosques whenever he sees fit. The government can unilaterally abrogate its contracts with and obligations towards the public whenever such contracts are against the interests of the country and Islam....The government can prevent its citizens from performing the Haj pilgrimage, which is one of the divine duties. ..."

The Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini
7 January, 1988

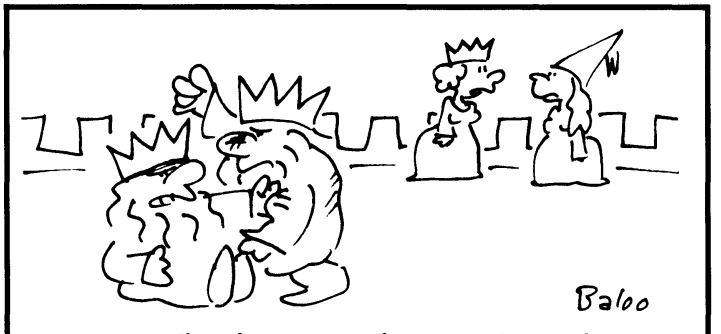
But, of course, what is he talking about that the U.S. government hasn't already done? The U.S. government has prohibited certain religious practices from time to time, including the use of recreational drugs. What of the religious practice that some people have of not bearing arms against their fellow man? I, for one, make a religious practice of not paying into Ponzi schemes. While the U.S. has yet to prohibit anyone from making the Haj pilgrimage to Mecca, the State Department could with a stroke of a bureaucrat's pen declare it illegal to travel to any country it names. One suspects that, as Iran is now on that list, a successful fundamentalist revolt in Saudi Arabia could place that country on the list of no-no countries.

The I.R.S and the State of California have closed more than one church when they have seen fit.

Certainly going off the gold standard and abrogating gold clause contracts were unilateral abrogations of contracts and obligations, not only to U.S. citizens but to people around the world. If you don't believe me on this point, read Justice McReynold's dissent in the latter case!

In short, the only difference I find between the U.S. government and that of Ayatollah Khomeini is that the latter is at least honest in what it is about, and does not insult my intelligence by claiming that what it does is for my own good.

The Sierra Leone Solution The Haitian government would like to devalue the Gourde. But Haitian banknotes have, since 1919, promised to pay the bearer one American dollar for every five gourdes. Devaluating the currency would mean issuing new banknotes. The Haitian central bank can't afford to have the notes printed. Maybe the American government will arrive at the same solution. We can hope!



"They're fighting over which one of them is most committed to the peace process."

Man For All Seasons and Many Reasons

Continued from page 8

LeFevre seemed to me to be an alternative. **He** acted on **his** beliefs. He certainly encouraged others to do the same, to understand what he understood. But he neither despaired cynically of the project or roared in frustration for a crusade to teach the heathen. He saw the world in terms of individuals. His appeal was not to society. It was not to history, or humanity, or future generations, or to any such abstraction. His differences would be with you. His agreement would be with you. He did not want to change the world. Individuals changing were the only way the world would ever change. And he felt that only you could change yourself. He did not, to cut to the core of it, want intermediaries of coercion in that process. Life, in his view, should be a matter of the self-controlled, volitional actions between free humans.

Of all the intermediary forces that LeFevre despised and abjured, violence was foremost. It, certainly not money, was, in his view, the root of all evil. Without violence, for instance, all humans would be free to make up their own minds about their own lives. Without violence keeping them in line they could change their minds, their lives, their relationships.

The author of this biography of Bob LeFevre resurrects a quotation from an interview which, indeed, sums up LeFevre's main point: "Do as you please—but harm no other in his person or property."

From that position can be extrapolated everything that LeFevre taught and talked about. From that position can be extrapolated his persistent insistence that the individual, not tides of history, not winds of war, not storms of ideology, not pressures of politics, is the key to it all. The individual, to be free, or controlled, must and does make up his or her own mind. The person who submits to control "believes" that some one or some institution has the authority, the right to control the person. But, by nature, LeFevre believed, humans are free, unique, and if they **will** it, absolutely able to control themselves.

Perhaps the most discord generated by his position was in the viewing of it by many as simple pacifism. His position rejected violence even in self-defense. It could see no gain for freedom in using the tool of tyranny—violence. But that isn't simple pacifism. It is not a position simply in opposition to violence. It was a position in favor of the centrality of individualism, with violence seen as something to be resisted not in the abstract but in the concrete sense that it violated human self-control.

I have known many who profess what I think of as simple pacifism. They focus on the violence itself. They will not be violent against anyone else. To be violent would be to sin against someone, to commit a wrong against the person to whom the violence is directed. LeFevre's point was subtle and different. He did not abhor the violence because of what it would do to someone else. He abhorred it because of what it would do to him! Teaching that the individual is central and that concord among individuals depends on the self-controlled agreement to "do as you please—but harm no other in his person or property" LeFevre was 100% consistent in a position from which he would absolutely refuse to harm another person. He could obviously hope that the refusal to do harm would be reciprocated but he also knew that only he could be responsible for his own actions.

He proclaimed his position. He taught it to all who would, voluntarily, listen. He would impose it upon no one. And he would live by his position as an individual though the entire universe might turn against him.

That this was no simple position, but a wonderfully comprehensive one, is evidenced by LeFevre's attitude toward politics and government.

He realized that some people want to be governed. He never suggested that they be denied the fulfillment of that need. He never suggested overthrowing the politics that fed that need. He did advocate withdrawing completely from it. Let the State exist for those who want it, but let it not harm me or any other who did not want it.

He did not believe for an instant in the possibility of good coming from political action nor did he harbor any illusion about "improving" an institution so dependent upon violence as the State. The institution itself was beyond redemption in his view since, even with angels at the controls, it would still depend upon violence to enforce its actions.

Education, person-by-person, was the tedious alternative which LeFevre saw as the only fitting course of the improvement of the human condition, the only course true to what he saw as the nature of humans to be absolute controllers only of their own selves.

Just as his refusal to engage in violence was not simple pacifism, his denunciation of the State was not simple anarchism. Anarchism, which is opposition to the institution of the State, is a positional shelter for many positive forces as well as the single negative one of opposing the State.

It was many of those positive forces the LeFevre opposed with as much vigor as he opposed the State itself. The attacks by many anarchists against private property were in absolute contradiction of LeFevre's dictum of doing what you will without harming another. Humans who peacefully produce wealth or other property or who peacefully have claim to land would never be dispossessed in a truly free society, one free of statist violence. The ownership of self implies the ownership of those things associated with the labors of the self. Thus property. To dispossess someone of property, no matter how benign the motive, implies the use of force, violence.

On the other hand, the single positive position of anarchism, opposition to the State, was too narrow for LeFevre. He felt that the positive virtues of individualism were greater than mere opposition to an institution.

Yet, in the span of positions, it is libertarian or free market anarchism, with its consistent defense of the rights of ownership, and of individual self-ownership, that LeFevre's position most closely parallels. He saw as clearly as anyone that most interesting paradox in which some of these same libertarians associated for actual political action, even while foreswearing the use of force to accomplish political, social, or personal goals. How, he often goaded them, could they both renounce force while participating in a process founded fully upon it?

Education of the individual, the freedom education which is at the heart of this book, was the alternative LeFevre saw as the only decent one, the only one which justifies its ends by its means.

It is a great measure of the civility of Bob LeFevre, that he could gently abide, without approving, the actions and friendship of many who, for simply utilitarian purposes, flirted with politics, being nowhere near as composed in principle as Bob was. As one of those myself,I was always mindful of Bob's great patience, the truly caring nature of his advice, and, finally, the clear rightness of his principles. But I also feel that of all the people I have known, Bob LeFevre, more than anyone else, would want every individual to steer his or her own course, being fully responsible for its every twist and turn. LeFevre left us all a magnificent chart. He did not leave us any command to sail. That, he knew, and we all should know, is up to each of us.

"It's nothing against you personally—I'd be voluntaryist no matter *who* was king."

Man For All Seasons and Many Reasons
Foreword to the Biography of Robert LeFevre

By Karl Hess

It is a measure of the great breadth of Robert LeFevre's influence and character that so many will remember him for so many different reasons. Teacher. Schoolmaster. Consultant. Businessman. Philosopher. Soldier. Religionist. Social Theorist. Debater. Author. Socratic Goad. Experimenter. Maddening Demander of Consistency. Searcher. Finder. Good Friend. Implacable Foe. All of that is detailed in this book.

My special reason for remembering him is civility. His. Not mine. Being given to temper and rash actions, I always felt that Bob was a great anchor to windward, reminding me that it is possible, indeed desirable, to keep a steady helm and an even keel even in the stormiest debate or contention.

Bob's civility was majestic. It made him seem as a great rock around which angry waves could crash but which they could never submerge or move.

Bob actually acted as though humans, being rational, would recognize thoughts that coincided with material reality and then act accordingly. That belief, that informed thought will move a people, an institution, or an individual to action, is one of the human race's most enduring optimisms.

For many, seeing it also as an illusion, cynicism develops. For others, seeing it as a mandate to be imposed, develop crusades for change or reform.

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CONTRIBUTORS TO THE LeFEVRE BOOK FUND

The following individuals have helped assure the publication of Bob LeFevre's biography. They deserve many thanks.

Anonymous
Paul Belknap
Paul Bilzi
Chris Boehr
Walter Clark
Lewis Coleman, M.D.
Kevin & Patricia Cullinane
Donald Dean
Don Duncan
Charles Estes
J. L. Erickson
Stephen & Mary Eva
Don Gastineau
Raymond Geddes, Jr.
Charles Hamilton
Ron Hartzog
David Hendersen
Harry Hoiles
Karen Huffman
John & Marilyn Imig
Floy Johnson
Robert Love
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Joyce & Tom Nipper
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