



LEGISLATORS GO HOME



My final paycheck from the Army Air Corps (1945) was less than \$500. By working about fifteen hours a day, going without, and sticking my neck out on credit, I accumulated a few assets and co-workers. I was an employer. Naively, I believed that my employees would be grateful that I had scrimped and gone without. If I hadn't, there would have been no jobs, for them or me. They didn't see it that way.

My business was harassed by political regulation, and my earnings were subject to federal extraction. Local government and union intervention also took away my money, battered me into uncertainty, and substantially reduced the range of decision-making left to me.

A question constantly reshaped in my mind. I

was a red, white, and blue American." Nurtured on the intellectual pabulum offered in the government school system, I believed I owed a loyalty to the government, which I mistakenly viewed as "my country." It was okay to oppose taxation above a certain level, but if I went beyond, I would be "disloyal." But what was that level? How much government was the "right" amount of government?

I saw government as a protector — a referee, a dispassionate source of justice and safety. Law and order was the barrier against naked chaos.

My enterprise was honest. I had no power whatever to force anyone to patronize me, and I had plenty of competition, people who could do and were doing what I was at a competitive level of quality and price. But my employees, with some

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(continued)

notable exceptions, thought of me as an exploiter. Whatever I paid them, I ought to pay them more. All the money I took in, they seemed to believe, went into my pocket. I charged so *much* (my prices were, in fact, competitive on the down side; I charged less) because I was taking advantage of customers. Any time employees could get more out of me, it would be justified. I was fair game.

Factually, some of my employees pocketed more money than I did. My creditors got the lion's share; my payroll, the tiger's; suppliers of goods and services I had to purchase came in like a band of wol-verines, and I got the mouse's mite. And over all of us the government glowered, ripping off a tax-take the size of the *Tyrannosaurus rex*.

Convinced that I *knew* what the purpose of government was, I began exchanging views with other businessmen. They, too, thought the government had gotten "too big." It was no longer a referee. It was intruding, becoming overbearing, dictatorial, oppressive. While the government, in theory, was our protector, how could we find protection from our protector if government itself was, in fact, the biggest aggressor?

I sought for those who had more knowledge and experience than I. They said we faced a communist conspiracy. America had been infiltrated by a malign but canny group aimed at subverting the American "way of life" and placing us under communist (which at the time meant Russian) control. It seemed that the nation was beset with foreign snoops, native dupes, and politicians eager to fulfill the tenets of "Das Capital" and the "Communist Manifesto."

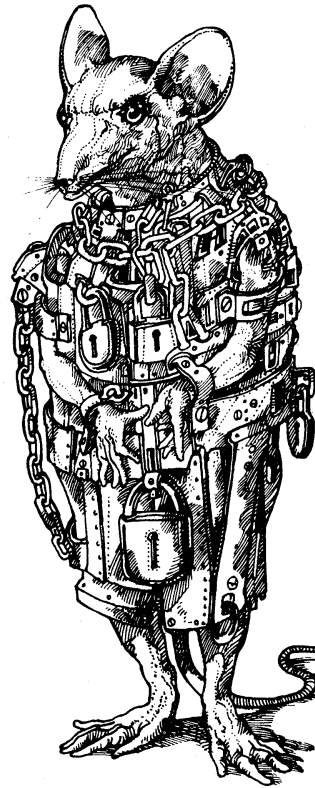
Filled with patriotism and the churning zeal of a crusader, I spoke before every club, civic group, professional association, or non-organized aggregation across the country that would book me, a modern Paul Revere warning the populace that the red (without the coats) menace was at hand. But the alert had already been sounded. Virtually without exception, American business and professional people believed in the existence of the communist menace. But what could they do? Did I have a program of action for them?

My only answer, and even then it sounded hollow as I gave it, was to get involved in politics and vote the "right way."

They assured me this was what they had been doing. They had voted for the "right" people, only to find themselves repeatedly betrayed.

But then I noticed something. They said they wanted to take effective action against communism. But they revealed a willingness to adopt the very programs Marx had recommended.

Didn't they understand that their enemy was *communism* (an economic philosophy)? No, they did not. Many of them still don't; hence, the longevity of the Birch Society, heir-apparent to the conspiracy syndrome. Their enemy is *communists*.



Portrait of a
Businessman

On my tour I spoke before a group of doctors, members of the American Medical Association. Where did they stand on communism, I asked. They were against it. The doctor-patient relationship was private, privileged, and personal; it was a free market. When I asked how they felt about a proposed law to control fees that doctors could charge, I met a wrathful roomful of doctors. "What's the matter with you, LeFevre?" "We thought you understood the nature of communism!" "Don't you know that Lenin once said that socialized medicine is 'the keystone in the arch of communism'?"

"Besides," one irate medico informed me, "medical fees can't be standardized and remain

fair. No two appendectomies are identical. With some there are many complications; with others, virtually none. And the same applies in all medical and surgical cases. Fees cannot be made the same without gross abuse of the relationship between doctor and patient." I was finally able to convince the doctors that I was not *advocating* socialized medicine, I was merely inquiring as to their view.

A little later that evening I asked, "Would you approve the mandatory appointment of a doctor to each local agency that issues building permits? General contractors are bound to try to cut costs. Might they not take shortcuts in the installation, say, of plumbing facilities? Could this constitute a health hazard?"

Certainly, laws should be passed to protect the public from inadequate and greedy building contractors, I was told. Didn't I understand that drainage was a constant health problem? Unless government regulated contractors, engineers, architects, and builders, we might face the threat of contagion and plague.

Curiously, a little later on, I spoke before members of the National Association of Real Estate Boards. The response was the same, in reverse. They, too, were concerned about communism. Real estate people had to be free. No laws should tie their hands. But what of doctors' fees? NAREB members and visitors (including a sprinkling of contractors, engineers, and architects) believed that regulation of the medical profession was long over-

due. Why, a doctor might remove an appendix for an employee for \$60, but charge \$2,000 for the same operation if the patient happened to manage or own a business. Outrageous!

Yet, as with the doctors, the NAREB people said they opposed communism. What became clear was that each group I approached wanted freedom for their own members and controls such as those advocated by socialists or communists slapped on everyone else.

What will a representative government do in response? Logically, and in line with their own selfish interests, politicians pass laws restricting and controlling *all* groups and *all* individuals. And they can readily justify such moves on the grounds that there is large public clamor for the restraints. It is not in the interest of any politician to do nothing. He gets elected or re-elected for what he has done *for* others, not for what he has refrained from doing *to* others.

Since government has nothing of its own (at the outset; it is, by definition, parasitical), its entire ability to remain in power rests upon its skills in pitting one group against another. Some are helped at the expense of all.

My business and professional compatriots repeatedly told me that the taxes they paid were unfair; that government was too large, it ought to be reduced. But for every plea asking the government to reduce, came a dozen asking it to do more.

Of course, in these earlier days, conservative Republicans were saying what the political-activist "libertarian" is saying now: that the best interest of the people is a reduction in government. But politics functions on power. The men in government, who are as profit-oriented as anyone else, will act in their own best interest. And that interest to a politician, whether Republican or Democratic (or libertarian), is to get more power to help more people (whatever their expectations). Acquisition of power leads to enlargement, regardless of political promises to reduce.

It was easy for me to reason from this that businessmen would support a school which sought to develop and teach a philosophy which rejected reliance on government. I founded the Freedom School and then went out to get the financial support that I believed would come gladly from the business community.

At first, I was welcomed; nay, applauded. Help came. And I was told that if I took a consistent position, I would get all kinds of support. Understandably, businessmen were a trifle leery that I could accomplish my objectives. Perhaps, I reasoned, they were afraid of an intellectual ambush, afraid that later I might advocate some new taxing or regulatory program. They were accustomed to all kinds of promises from persuasive politicians, only to find betrayal. Proof of my dedication would be found in what I did, not in what I professed. So I worked to make my philosophy and my actions

totally consistent, to frame a consistent philosophy based upon free-market principles. And the school began to take root in a modest way.

But now as I went out to my business acquaintances to get the assistance they had promised, I detected a growing aloofness. My position was too uncompromising. It made many uncomfortable. It took me a long time to understand why.


Businessmen in general (there were some outstanding exceptions, but only a few), didn't *really* want a consistent position. They didn't want to be taxed or regulated in their own businesses. But most of them favored a protective tariff, while admitting that it was contrary to free market principles. Most of them favored government highways, government schools, government loans, government assistance on a hundred fronts. They were not at all averse to having the government in as a partner, provided only that the government did what *they* wished; that it favored them to the disadvantage of others.

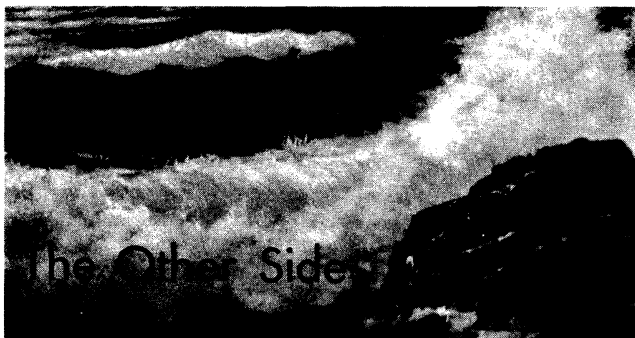
They talked about freedom and a free market, but they appealed to Washington for more money spent as they wanted it spent; to favor them, never mind how it affected the market generally.

In learning what I had to learn, I discovered why our freedom is disappearing. While there are businessmen who really do favor freedom, most do not. They favor freedom for themselves, but view it as a danger if competitors are equally free. I know of no law on the books but what has been backed by solid numbers of businessmen or by pressure groups of one kind or another, or both.

There are a few — give them credit — who are willing to forego political favor. But even they hesitate to reveal their disenchantment; they fear that a commitment to liberty would be bad for their image in the community, and might open them to government investigation.

If a society of liberty is ever to be achieved, it will have to be wrought with the concurrence and consistent cooperation of the American business community. Gradually, businessmen are learning that government is not their friend. Any time they are ready to accept a consistent position in this regard, the government will lose its sustaining power.

Meanwhile, as one writer of my acquaintance stated candidly, "The businessman must save himself." Any time a significant number of businessmen will take a public position in which they make it clear that they will win or lose on their ability to offer better goods and services to customers at a competitive price; that they do not want government help any more than they want government regulation and taxation of their own incomes and businesses; that free men need not fear one another; that true leadership is not dependent upon nor should it be subject to political decision-making — any time they do this, they can manage without government. Until they do this, they not only will not manage, they hardly deserve the liberty they profess. 



I'm as excited as a small boy spinning his first top. There has been a 30 per cent increase in those making the publication of the *Journal* possible. Those who hadn't yet exchanged gifts received a special spring edition: no printing save headlines

EDWARD UNDERWOOD: "Educators as early as 1893 boasted that our social and economic orders would be changed through the public education system You undoubtedly have friends, as do I, who though highly intelligent and capable, are conditioned to dismiss all irksome conditions as the responsibility of an indefinite someone else. They use the reasoning process only in matters of their own concern. It seems to me that no change can be effected other than by reversing the educational process which caused the damage, by building anew at the kindergarten level." *Very good point. The esteemed educators you mention did not seek to educate, they sought and still do, to condition in the direction of their own social design. The libertarian position I espouse is reliant upon education, not as a conditioner but as a means of drawing forth the latency of the student in terms of reality; not in terms of what "I want" for him. What I want for him is his right to do it his way without interfering with others.*

RICHARD HARMON: "Your *Journal* changed my application of libertarian principles to my actions in life . . . helped me to decide not to run for another term on the government school board. I feel very good about the decision, though it was with mixed emotions that I made the announcement . . . reported in local papers along with the reasons for it." *Send me a clipping, please! You're a winner of the LeFevre GOLD STAR award. Any holder of political office is eligible when he decides to rejoin the human race.*

DAVIS KEELER: "I'm pleased to contribute to your band of merry revolutionaries. It seems we are ruled by opinion. The popular opinion of what is right or proper sets the limits on our rulers. It is, furthermore, opinion alone which makes them our rulers and

causes us to accept their legitimacy. One of the rationalizations of this opinion is that without government we will have no streets, garbage collection, physical protection, mail service, clean air, or what-have-you. The patient, case-by-case explanation of how the free market will work to provide these necessities may well turn out to be the fundamental argument against the state. By showing that the state is not necessary, we may lead people to the opinion that its burdens, heretofore thought inevitable, are in fact intolerable." *The formation of popular opinion is largely the task of mass media, which do a great deal more in developing our daily lives than government wishes. Hence, government's invariable antagonism to freedom of the press. But this is an excellent example of the viability of a free market. A member of the press, in fact, has greater influence than a congressman. So why fuss with the people who are essentially helpless and not at all influential unless the press cooperates with them?*

A. REYNOLDS MORSE: "Your 'Journey into Reality' is unreality, I'm afraid. How do you stop IRS, OSHA, EPA, CIA, FBI, FDA, NIOSH, SEC, OPRS, etc. That's reality!" *Thanks for providing the artwork on pages 1 and 2.*

BESSIE BLASKA: "I remember you well from the first Congress of Freedom. Was it 1950 or 1951, in Omaha? A wonderful convention, comprised of some of the most intelligent and interesting people I've ever met. My best wishes for keeping up these labors all these years. You've done an excellent job. I too have been well occupied separating wheat from chaff." *And I remember you, too, with great fondness.*

PAUL BILZI: "I'm a former student now paying off a multitude of debts, so finances will be tight for

and artwork, and a notice that I'd have to have tangible evidence of interest if they wanted to continue receiving it.

There is no selling price for the *Journal*. People support it to the degree they value it. One man sent me one penny. He'll be treated the same as if he had sent \$50 — which two friends did. Another said, "I am so far behind in my reading that I was actually relieved to find your latest issue blank inside!" Dr. H. B. Hambly said, "This appeal is the best I have ever seen!" Mark Nitikman observed, "I was so impressed with the originality of your monetary plea that I'm sending this off the same day I received the *un-Journal*."

Supporting *LeFevre's Journal* is like scratching the back of your favorite house pet. It's hard to over-do it.

awhile. I've been an avid follower of yours for some time. You were the second libertarian writer I was exposed to, after Ayn Rand. I particularly have been impressed by your great worries about justice, a concern which has not received enough attention from others." *Congratulations, Paul, on working to pay off your debts. And thank you for what you have to say about my writing.*

C. M. FOOTE: "I find your book *This Bread Is Mine* the most lucid exposition of the individualistic versus the socialistic viewpoint that I've ever read. I especially liked your Declaration of Individualism as well as the facts cited to prove the repeated injuries and usurpations by government against humankind. I'm thinking of publishing such a declaration in our local news media and should like to have permission to use your Declaration of Individualism, giving credit to you, but subscribing wholeheartedly to your philosophy." *Permission granted. Please send me a copy if it appears.*

GLENN HODGSON: "I was enthusiastic that there was a Libertarian Party in Canada. Then someone asked a party spokesman what he would do to stop the U.S. from buying up Canadian industry and property. He said he'd make a law prohibiting people from the U.S. from doing so. I felt a chill all through my body. I was somewhat enthusiastic when I received the appeal for funds for 50,000 votes. But the idea of a Libertarian Party seemed out of place with libertarianism. Your essay helped me bring into focus the principles involved. The political method is wrong. It goes against the basic principles of libertarianism. The ends don't justify the means. We cannot achieve freedom by using coercion. If we want freedom, we must use it to achieve it. Thanks."

ROBERT BORDEN, M.D.: "Do you think if we petitioned Congress we could increase the number of seasons and thereby the number of issues of LeFevre's JOURNAL?!! I'd like to find a surefire way of getting my medical colleagues (among others) somewhat familiar with the law of cause and effect. It's sad the way intelligent men will sell their soul rather than say NO just one time. They believe that if we hang ourselves, we will not be murdered. Either way, we are dead and the availability of medical care as well as quality is certain to be diminished. It appears they will have to become slaves before they will appreciate freedom, if then. I continue to resist tyranny actively and passively. It's fun at times. I said NO to the extortion racket known as alimony and was sentenced to 60 days for contempt of court. I was released after 38 days and still have not paid alimony. I received considerable media coverage and it really upset the lawyers and judges . . . They are leaving me alone for the time being. I really felt good while I was behind bars. They knew who was right morally! I appreciate the value of your writing. Keep up the fantastic work. Those two weeks at Carmel Valley were the best single investment and experience of my life." *I hope you won't petition Congress. They just might try to redesign the 365-day year. They've operated contrary to reality in most other ways, so why not here?*

ROBERT EWING: "We usually leave the *Journal* on the coffee table and let all the kids take a look at it. Seems like most of them like your ideas. Perhaps there is some hope along those lines." *The Journal makes an ideal decoration for coffee tables, reception desks, and display counters.*

PAUL BELKNAP: "You've done it again. The lead article in the winter issue is a masterpiece. It puts the libertarian philosophy in a clear and concise manner and sets forth the guidelines in no uncertain terms for those who wish to be true libertarians or students of freedom."

EWALD STECHHOLZ: "I cut short a long career in the U.S. Army Reserve because I finally concluded that I, at least, should no longer accept taxpayers' dollars for this dubious activity. I also resolved never again to teach in a public school for pretty much the same reasons. I can honestly say that I now feel real good about it. I haven't voted for a political candidate since 1964 and feel good about that every election day. I do vote on local

referendums whenever an appropriation of public funds comes up. I'm always against it. Is this participation in the political process or an act designed to diminish that process?" *Read my little item "Abstain from Beans," available on request. I'm still applauding your decisions with the single exception noted.*

BILL CONERLY: "I've become unhappy with the libertarian economics (I'm a graduate student at Duke) and I've come to the conclusion that the Rothbard-von Mises approach is neo-classicalism warmed over, with a *priorism* (which is unnecessary to libertarian economics), and an ostrich-headed approach to the advances in thought of the past forty years. For instance, libertarians need not treat Keynes as shabbily as they do. The open-minded libertarian who has studied economics will conclude as I have (that sounds terrible, doesn't it?) that government could, theoretically, improve the economy over anarchy. However, the best course for the government is usually in contradiction to the interests of the politicians and bureaucrats, so governments in practice always botch things up. But my major complaint is that libertarians begin their economic study convinced that anyone who isn't of 'Austrian' training is wrong. Group-think persists, even among libertarians." *Group-think may well be the essence of non-think. Still, when we learn the nature of a given item of reality, it is unavoidable that we will concur about it.*

JOHN WALKER: "I do not recall your ever taking an absolutely unambiguous position on the moral status of force in self-defense. (You sometimes seem to have a nasty habit of playing Socrates, throwing out ideas more to wake the sleeping than to enlighten the darkened.) It's popular to hold that the absence of force is morally desirable or even obligatory, but is just not practically possible. I find the contrary argument stronger, i.e., that while self-defense may be theoretically permissible, the institution of force is like wild-fire and we may reasonably conclude that even legitimate force will bring about worse evils than it seeks to defeat." *The ambiguity you apparently detect is not of my making. I view man as an owner of himself and his resources. Whenever a man uses force on another man, it is his attempt to treat the other as a kind of property. But if the other man is also a property owner, then he cannot rightfully be treated as property.*


MOLLIE CARROLL: "Having watched your work with enthusiasm for years, I am glad for your *Journal*. I'm enclosing a small check for your *Journal* to be sent to someone else . . . at age 85 I am concerned that what you have to say gets to others, and especially to younger people."

RICHARD BLACKBURN: "Thank you for exchanging gifts with me. I thoroughly enjoyed reading your ideas and experiences and would like to continue. Enclosed is a small gift — modest because I'm now working my way through college and my support to efforts for human liberty must be other than monetary."

RICHARD HUEMER, M.D.: "I suspect that some of your troubles may be similar to those I've encountered in trying to finance a small research institute. People are not *friendly* toward scientific research because its results are not immediately gratifying to them. So long as people *prefer* to let the government pay for science, the government will continue to control it, and creativity in science will be stifled."

ARTHUR PROSSER, JR.: "C. S. Lewis (Screwtape toast) points out that the middle class (since Protestant Reformation) produced the productive genius of our western civilization. Now it's being taxed out of existence. So we go back to the knavery of the dark ages with its extremes of wealth and poverty . . ."

CHRISTINE CARSON: "Are there any 'non-subscribers' in the Salt Lake-Ogden-Provo area other than myself and my father, George Allred? We'd enjoy starting a discussion group . . . I enjoy the mental stimulation in the *Journal* . . . the reassurance that I'm not all that alone — there are others in the world with ideas similar to mine." *The Journal will forward responses.*

HARRY FREEMAN, JR.: "I'd like to see an article on successful techniques for converting people to libertarianism; why some are backsliders and why the Birchers seem to be more successful in converting people. Perhaps you could also discuss the different stages of development and understanding of libertarianism. Political action seems to be an early stage for most. How can those at that stage be encouraged to not 'freeze' there but to continue to develop self-control liberation?" *Fear is a great motivator; Birchers thrive on promoting the conspiracy syndrome, which scares people half to death. The Journal will continue to reveal, step by step, my own intellectual progression.* 

TO CATCH A THIEF.

Property, the tangibles and intangibles we own, is the source of nearly all of the human conflict in the world.

Socialists, in general, favor publicly held property. Non-socialists, in general, favor private ownership of property. Neither socialist nor non-socialist is necessarily consistent in his view. Few socialists favor *total* socialization; few non-socialists favor *total* private ownership.

In the socialist view, to steal from those who have much so that it can be given to those who have little, is not called theft, but is rationalized as justifiable redistribution.

In the non-socialist encampment, any act of theft is viewed as a "wrong" regardless of what the thief may intend doing with what he steals. But within this framework there are two differing views of property.

At this point I will neglect the socialist views. I wish to contrast the two non-socialist positions, both of which favor private ownership.

Clearly, the manner in which people think about property and deal with it, is a result of their learning processes, however conducted. There is no particular way of dealing with property that is imposed from on high. Intelligence suggests that we understand the nature of property to the degree possible and then adopt a position in respect to it which is consistent with human well-being and, at the same time, internally consistent. That is, we cannot take the view that it is all right for some to steal but wrong for others and at the same time be internally consistent.

It is quite possible that some may not feel comfortable with either position. But what is essential in the application of reason is the recognition that comfort is irrelevant when a challenge is given to a concept long adhered to.

View One: An act of theft is wrong. It consists in a taking of the property (by any method) of another against the will of that other. Because such an act is wrong, it is always right for the wronged party to repossess himself of what he had prior to the act of theft.

There are gradations here, but the essential view is the same. Some, out of a sense of humanity, would reclaim the property if they could get their hands on it without a struggle. Others contend that they are morally justified to go to *any* lengths to get it back, including the murder of the thief. As I say, these views vary as to the extent to which a person may go to recover what he once had. But extent or degree does not make a principle. The principle which is upheld here is one that says: a wrongful act creates a super-right in the wronged party so that he can *rightfully* take back what was *wrongfully* taken from him.

Stated another way, this principle supposes that

an act of theft does *not* transfer the right of ownership; the thief who has possessed himself of an item does not *own* it. Therefore, the wronged person may *rightfully* pick up what someone else took from him but which is still his.

View Two: This way of looking at property and its theft contains the essential of separating the act of theft from the property. In short, it recognizes that although the thief was wrong in taking what was not his, against the will of the owner, in fact he *did* take it and the matter is *fait accompli*. To wit: the thief now *owns* the property. With this view in mind, an action against the thief, in which something belonging to the thief (anything) is taken from him against his will, would be a new act of theft.

In a curious way, *both* of these views are accepted in our current culture. This creates a major internal contradiction which calls for constant third-party interventions (court actions and police), which interventions simply result in arbitrary decisions handed down, sometimes favoring the first, sometimes the second party.

The principal argument offered in support of the first theory is that without granting to the victim a super-right over the thief, theft would be encouraged. To wit: all a person would have to do is to get away with an act of theft and the property stolen becomes his. Therefore, the victim must obtain a right over the party who injures him.

The principal argument offered in support of the second position is that it is internally consistent. It does not excuse *any* taking from anyone for any reason. Every act in which a property is taken from another against the will of the other is branded as wrong. There are *no* exceptions.

What is at stake here is sufficient time to study and compare the two principles in depth until one finally discerns that the second principle contains far more effective methods for discouraging theft than does the first. For, bear in mind, the principal argument in support of the first position is *expediency*. Whereas the principal argument offered in support of the second is *consistency*. With additional study we learn that consistency inadvertently contains possibilities for superior results. Thus, in time, we learn that the second method is not only consistent internally but leads to the incidence of theft in a descending spiral.

The reason for this is that the first position *cannot* be sustained without third-party intervention. It requires, it demands, some agency of retribution and retaliation. Whether this be a government or a private agency becomes ultimately a semantic rather than a meaningful distinction. Any agency, public or private, which may with impunity violate the property boundaries of others and sustain the aura of *rightness* in so doing, is a de facto government, whatever we choose to call it, or however we

organize it.

And when we organize such an agency, in order to support it we must insist that it have the power to extract its financial support from *society*, or from *all* who are presumably to benefit by its existence. This creates the concept of taxation or *mandatory dues-paying membership* in the club. While this insistence on dues will always begin in a small way, the amount of the collections and the ferocity with which they will be collected inescapably grow. Lord Acton must have recognized this when he said, "All power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." In time, the total amount of theft performed by the agency of retribution far outstrips the occasional and random acts of theft performed by aberrant members of the "club." Meanwhile, this agency will arbitrarily judge in favor of one party or another in any private argument while it will consistently support the view that what it (the agency) steals is *not* theft.

There is, additionally, the argument that a "free market" retaliatory agency could be organized and supported only by those who voluntarily agreed to pay the dues. However, and this is the pertinent consideration, the "free market" agency would have to have the power to violate the boundaries of *all* in retributive or retaliatory actions. For if a dues-payer was victimized by a non-dues-payer, the property could not be retrieved on any contractual basis, since none existed.

I believe that the next point may be the pivotal one in this comparative analysis. In View One, the act of theft *taints the property*. It is assumed that the property is still owned by the original owner. Therefore, the *only* course of action to be followed is to return the property to its original owner by some method; preferably employing as little force as possible, but in the end (as some view it) total force is warranted. To wit: the property is *never* free of taint until it is returned to what is called "the rightful owner." Indeed, if a person pays money for such "stolen property" and it can later be proved that the property had been stolen, the new purchaser is told that he has lost his money. The property which he innocently and honestly purchased is taken from him by the central agency and bestowed upon the original victim.

Let us consider the ramifications of this view if it is to be consistently followed. Here is a thief who steals an apple and eats it. The apple must be returned to the party from whom it was stolen. Presumably, disembowelment of the thief is not only possible, it is *required* (if we are to be consistent).

Here is a person who has just finished paying for his home and the land on which it stands. But wait. This land was originally stolen from the Indians. The property must now be returned to descendants of those Indians and the individual who made the error of buying it not only can be *rightfully* dispossessed, it is mandatory that he be dispossessed. Bear in mind that in this view we do not separate

the act of theft from the property. The two are merged and the property is tainted until it is returned to the "rightful" owner.

And in the case just cited, where do we stop? Frequently, one group of Indians stole land from another group of Indians. Which group is to be the ultimate reposessor when no records are available?

Here is a man going into a store to make a purchase. But the storekeeper had best be wary in accepting money. Money bears no identifying *personal* mark which can establish that a specific piece of money has never been stolen. If at any time it has been stolen, the money *MUST* be returned to its original owner.

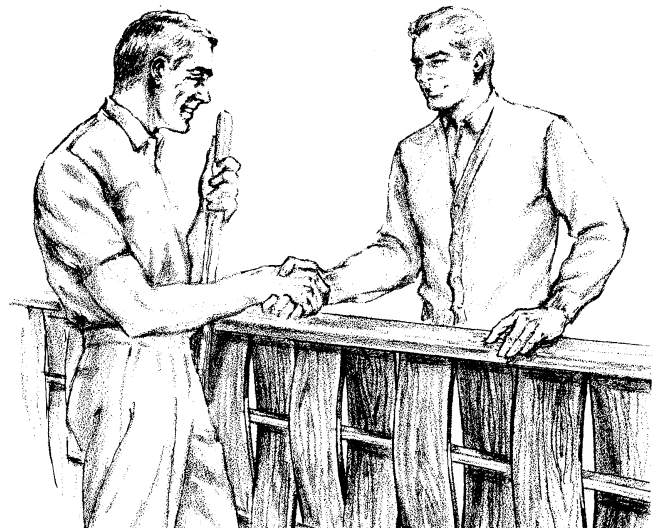
Now we are in a quagmire. In short, we might end accepting the socialist dictum that *everything* belongs to *everybody* and private ownership must be abolished.

But if you say, let us practice View One *except* in matters of money, or land, or whenever the going is difficult, then we have no principle at all but merely expediency, depending in each case upon an arbitrary decision imposed by a third party. Thus View One, while purporting to be the moral one, discouraging to theft, in practice is based upon situational ethics that ebb and flow like the tide, and which cannot be sustained with any consistency but must rely ultimately upon intervention and *public grand theft*.

The major argument against it, in addition to its inconsistency, is that it does not work. It has never worked well, and adherence to it gets us into wars and retributive legal postures and actions.

Dwell for a moment, if you will, upon the corruption and confusion that follow the assumption that anything stolen still belongs to the victim. By reason of this assumption, anything the government provides us in the way of social security, welfare, public benefactions or whatever, is rightfully ours, since the government has victimized us and all that we are receiving back is some of our own. Since this must be true, it is never wrong to accept a

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TO CATCH A THIEF . . .

(continued)

"benefit" from government for we have it coming. This means that people can and will become increasingly dependent on the state, and justify their dependence as moral, whereas, in fact, it is merely the acceptance of a share in stolen property.

Further, the same position justifies anything else we can lobby to obtain from the government for in each case we are simply insisting on getting back what was wrongfully taken from us in the first place. Where does this end?

As a logical alternative, we must abandon View One and consider the merits of View Two.

How will theft be discouraged? First of all, the education and training of children can be clear, consistent, and understandable. The violation of *any* property boundary is a *wrong* that taints the thief, not the property. Rationalizations, the sense of injury, emotion, and so on, change nothing. A violation of a property boundary of anyone, *for any reason*, is in itself wrong!

The first result to be viewed is that people will begin to *think* differently. They will begin to recognize that it is up to them as individuals to look after their property. They cannot count on "societal action" (third-party intervention) to patch things up.


Next, they will have full recourse to mass media

so that the names and locations of individuals who perform aberrant acts can be publicized. This, alone, will deter criminal acts far more than free room and board for the suspect at the hands of taxpayers. The reason there will be full recourse is that there will be no law inhibiting owners of mass media units from making full disclosures.

Third, the market place has already produced effective protection devices and methods. Assuming a free market, protection will remain a fertile area of constant refinement and improvement.

Finally, this view eliminates the concept of legalized theft (taxation). Any taking against the will of the owner is instantly recognized as what it is — an act of theft.

True, the second view will not eliminate theft. I know of no view that will. We will always have a few people who will, from time to time, expect to profit by taking from others. And some will get away with it. Just as we will invariably have occasional murders, rapes, whooping cough, and bad teeth.

My job is to see that I am not a thief. My job is to be fair and honest, not to sit in judgment on my fellows to determine their fairness and their honesty. I recognize that others may not always be fair or honest with me. But that in no way warrants a corruption of my own position. My morality does not depend upon *your* actions; it depends on mine. 



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