LeFevre's Journal
one man's point of view
fall 1975
vol. II no. 4

the man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free

Photograph by Willis B. Foote

THE FREE SOCIETY: PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Continuing human survival and the attainment of civilization may merge into a single concept. Perhaps they already have. By this I mean that the continuation of our species may become impossible unless we stop acting like killer apes and begin to use the brains with which we are endowed.

While scholars tend to refer to the emergence of the city and the beginning of urban living as the advent of "civilization," I do not. To me, civilized life depends on freedom, on peace, on voluntary exchange, on the use of reason and understanding whether one lives in city apartment, suburban dwelling, or rural farm. We can no longer afford the luxury of fighting wars to obtain peace, nor of enslaving some so that others can be free. If slave-making and war have become too costly, then the machinery by means of which these extravagances are provided will have to be phased out and abandoned.

I refer to government. All wars are made by governments; there are no exceptions. As for slaves, none have ever existed in any country at any time unless the political forces extant supported the practice. In the United States, as an example, the Constitution itself set forth the presumed "right" of the slave owner to repossess himself of a runaway slave.

Since the Constitution went into effect 186 years ago (not the 199 years ago that the political propaganda merchants currently want us to believe), there has been a Pollyanna effort to convince us that governments can be instruments for outlawing war and slavery. This is like asking fire to refrain from burning. Or demanding that water will make things dry.

The truth is that things act in accordance with their real nature. And government, by its nature, employs coercive power, which creates adversary relationships at all levels and obtains monopoly control through the practice of ultimate violence.

What is instructive to me is the nearly universal evidence that, even at this late hour, most of us are not yet ready to live without a government of force set over us. Indeed, I would have to argue that at this particular moment, most of us have exactly the kind and amount of government we deserve. And if the present gargantuan juggernaut were dismantled, another instrument, equally as coercive or worse, would rise in its place.

There are perhaps a million people, old and young, who today call themselves "libertarian." I know what they mean and my heart sings with

"PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS"
(*continued*)

theirs in sympathy and understanding. But most are in agreement only on one point: what we have in the way of government is oppressive, excessive, and possessive. But read what they write and listen to what they say, and my foreboding will become clear.

Nearly without exception, the universal cry is: "What can we do to lower our taxes?" Or: "What can we do to transfer power into the hands of libertarians?" Or: "How can we do away with the present government altogether?" These are the wrong questions, asked at the wrong time by the wrong people.

Of course taxes can be lowered. Every now and again, some particularly onerous tax burden is reduced or eliminated altogether. It takes enormous effort to accomplish even that much, but it can be done. However, most fail to see the principle involved. If those in government have the power to lower or eliminate a given tax, they also have the power to raise or institute a new tax. By responding to popular pressure, the government is not weakened, it is strengthened. For it reinforces the illusion that government can *rightfully rule.* Additionally, it convinces millions that it is responsive to the popular will, which causes more to trust in government and to look to it for solutions of any and every problem.

Of course power can be transferred into libertarian hands. All that is necessary is that sufficient voting strength (the power of massed numbers) be concentrated in that direction. But if libertarians become powerful enough in terms of numbers to win elections, then is it not reasonable to expect libertarians to want even more power to put down their adversaries? This is to maintain and support the adversary condition which breeds legal disputes, oppression, and war; which makes us all slaves of government, to some degree.

Bear in mind that a slave is not a prisoner. A slave is viewed by its master as a unit of production. Prisoners go to jail; slaves go to work. And the characteristic of any slave is that some of what he produces is taken by his master, not as the slave but as the master wishes. And no master takes it all, for in that case the slave would die. We are slaves precisely to the degree that what we earn is taken from us by those who own us. And those who own us invariably act as proprietors, being concerned with our good health, our useful skills, our longevity, and our ability to reproduce so that more slaves can be provided. In the current situation, government owns us all but marginally. We are granted by this governmental owner the option of disposing of a fraction of our incomes; the government takes the rest. But lest you get the notion that in the exercise of this option you are indeed free, may I remind you that your master passes endless legislation telling you what you are allowed to buy or sell; how much you can or cannot do.

What is the merit of having libertarian rulers? The single gain is that we can presume more generous owners who enlarge the marginal choices we presently have. The demerit is that we remain slaves. Our owners, in this case libertarians, still make the decisions for the rest of us.

Of course our present government can be done away with altogether. History, both ancient and current, confirms this fact. Any dedicated, hardened group of bandits, superbly armed and one-pointed in their thrust, can topple a particular regime. In any single year, the phenomenon is acted out somewhere on this planet. If it succeeds, the action is called a revolution. If it fails, it is called treason and the perpetrators are hanged if they can be found.

But all of this misses the mark. The question that should be asked is this: "How do we prevent a new government from forming, once the present government is abandoned?" And until we have the answer to that question, we had best take no action at all, except to learn.

To their credit, some libertarians are engaged in examining this problem. However, nearly all of them tell me that we must have a system in which *private protection companies,* possibly several acting competitively, will have the power to retaliate if any wrong occurs.

But that is what we have *now.* That is the purpose of the present government and of all governments ever designed or devised. What appears from the present spate of sophistry is no more than a hope of shifting power, combined by a semantic refinement. Instead of having a constabulary, the sheriff, the police force, the national guard, the army, et al, we are to have the Acme Protection Company, the Benign Protection Company, and the Conservative Protection Company. But each of these private firms, financed only by earnings from voluntary customer support and patronage, is to have the *sanction* (popular approval) of violating the wills, wishes, property boundaries, or lives, of those upon whom the *suspicion* of wrong-doing falls. Without that *sanctioned power,* private-company retaliation would become no more than vigilante action.

Let me make it clear that I support with considerable ardor the idea of private *protection* companies. They can quite properly provide protection on a high level of efficiency. They do so now. Given a free market with no government taxation to erode purchasing ability, their successes could become monumental. Yet by no stretch of the imagination can an honest man argue that they can perform perfectly. I have never found perfection in this life with any product or service, and certainly not with human performance. We are an imperfect species, dwelling in an imperfect world.

And here's the nub. What is to be done when, despite the protection one has voluntarily paid for,

he is victimized? The answer almost invariably is: "Then I have a *right* to get back what was taken." This entails *sanctioned* retaliation, forced restitution, and in some cases the infliction of punishment upon the wrong-doer. *But that is what we have.* That is government! And again we are back to a debate about how to violate the boundaries, properties, liberties, and lives of other by *right.* While a different method of invoking force may provide a service desired by some, it leaves intact the power of one group of men to violate the boundaries of other men with the approval of the collective. And that is the characteristic of all government.

I have always been impressed with the reasoning of William Godwin on this point. He warned that suspicion must attend those who rely upon force to get their way. The weapons of tyranny and upon which the tyrant depends make a poor showing in the hands of those sincerely interested in freedom and in peace. In short, the weapon that can, in the hands of a tyrant, create a slave, can, when passed into the hand of the slave, make him a tyrant in turn. And both freedom and peace mean the absence of tyranny. It matters not a bit whether you are the slave or the tyrant. In either case, freedom and peace have been abandoned.

And that's the point. Most so-called libertarians believe that I am in error here. They tell me that freedom and peace mean that *they* shall have things the way *they* want them. They are to be free; never mind who is victimized in the process. They are right . . . . objectively. No one is to violate *them.* If they violate others, the others have it coming. And that's full circle. Take a look at the American statutes and the existing body of criminal law. There is nothing in any of it which does not descend from the basic concept that life and property can be protected by retaliatory action. It's as total and as broadly based in the retaliatory "protection" of lives and properties as any politically oriented libertarian could wish.

Then what is the answer? Are we doomed to go on under the heel of the political boot? My answer is that we cannot. It is too costly. With our sophisticated technology, the aid of computers, eavesdropping devices, and weapons of both H. G. Wellsian and Orwellian magnitude, we can and will destroy each other and the world. We are engaged, willy-nilly, in creating an ant-hill society. We are interacting *with* the governmental processes on a growth basis. And it matters not at all whether this process of intervention is *called* governmental or *called* free enterprise. What it is, is what it is. Its nature does not change by the adoption of euphemism.

Then what is the answer? I see only one possible hope, and it is a slender thread at best. We must concentrate on protecting ourselves and abandon retaliation by *right.* It is clear that retaliation and protection are opposite concepts. If you are protected, in fact, retaliation is impossible. If you believe you must rely on retaliation, it can only mean that you were not protected. Protection is viable and can be provided in the market by various devices and through the good services of protection companies. Retaliation is the modus vivendi of bandits, of legalized governments, and of vigilante groups. It is the standard of Big Daddy and of Godfather I and II. It is the tool of barbarism and must be abandoned if we are to be civilized.

Does this mean that we are to become the victims of any criminal? As a matter of fact, that is the situation we are now in. As governments are organized and as the "new" protection companies of libertarian activists are envisioned, *you must first be injured* before you can be protected. And that is a contradiction of concepts, a collision of internal meanings. If you believed for a moment that you could be protected, you wouldn't be so worried about retaliating. But government has carried on propaganda for years which has aided in convincing you that you are impotent, and totally dependent upon somebody who can retaliate in your name.

Fortunately, the marketplace has already provided the answer. It had to. The market must operate with as high a level of efficiency as possible or the units in it go bankrupt. And many men in business have long realized that it is folly to throw good money after bad. If an employee is guilty of willful or negligent actions which result in company losses, the employee is fired. But the police are not called. Trying to retaliate is a waste of time and money. Even where an employee is caught stealing inside the firm, he usually gets a pink slip and the matter is dropped. Why? Because the employer cannot afford the luxury of vengeance. He moves to reduce the factor of continuing risk.

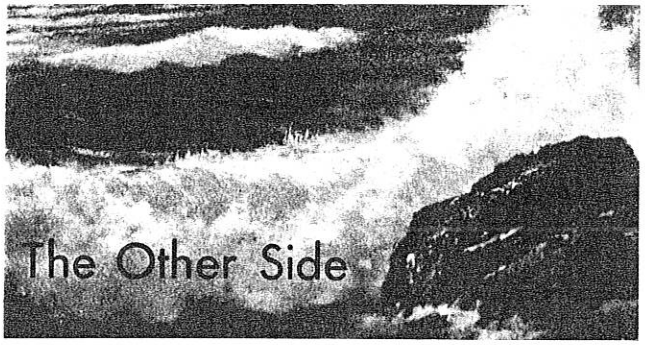
If you are given bad merchandise or service less than you were promised, the marketplace answer is to find another supplier. Switch your patronage. And if you are upset enough, tell your friends. What if you buy a lock for your front door and someone breaks it? The marketplace answer is to buy a better lock.

Curiously, we have a governmentally induced faith that we can catch a crook *after* his crime and safely lock him in. Actually, we can safely lock him out *before* he commits the crime.

Safely? Not perfectly. No jail is escape proof, and no technique, device, or service is perfect. But neither is any meal, house, car, tire, engine, suit, TV set, or refrigerator. You merely move in the direction of your greatest safety, your best good or service, at your least cost, and maximize your chances for peace and freedom.

The cost in a free society from occasional losses, when you are purchasing protection rather than retaliation, is minimal. The cost of paying for retaliation, by legal action, war, or any other method which requires further violence, has become prohibitive.

I see the rejection of retaliation as the only reasonable approach to civilization and survival.



In the summer issue of *LeFevre's Journal*, my article "To Catch a Thief" drew fire from a number of people who, calling themselves libertarian, view a free society as one in which they carry the guns rather than having the government carry them. My own view in this highly important area is further expanded and expounded in this issue.

I've tried below to get caught up with all the correspondence that has been put aside during the year. And I didn't quite do it. It's enormously gratifying to find your letters coming to our little green men in the tiny letter box, and most particularly helpful when checks accompany the letters. That we are experiencing some economic problems in the nation is clearly shown by the shrinkage in size, and the attrition in number, of the checks coming in. All the more reason for me to appreciate each bit of generous help that comes. Thank you.

DAVID CARL ARGALL: "Re your questions, 'Journey into Reality': Yes, I believe in peace. However, peace, like silence, exists only when all allow it . . . To regain peace or silence, I may have to shatter it still more, by waging war or shushing the noisemaker . . . . The warlike attack on the mugger has my full approval." *I hope you will read carefully what I have to say elsewhere in this issue.*

BILL BECK: "I had the extreme pleasure of attending your seminar in Honolulu. I don't believe the enclosed is enough to offset your cost of sending me the *Journal* but I must send a token of appreciation for all I've learned from you . . . . Hope to build a new home (with a den large enough for a LeFevre seminar!). I often wonder if I'll ever realize my dreams." *Let me share your dream. And thanks.*

JAMES GREENE: "We will no longer accept this literature from your organization. It is deemed obscene and unfit for our household. *Immediately* cease in sending us any more of these publications."

LOIS SARGENT: "Quoting you: 'This determination to set one's goals and one's methods within the context of reality requires understanding of reality. Thus, the movement toward a libertarian society is in fact a movement toward understanding of reality.' How do you interpret reality? I run to my dictionary. I suppose you meant what is physically apparent — and perhaps also, interpreting conditions or situations according to basic principles — but I prefer to find my own understanding of reality. Whether this coincides with yours, I do not know. I think I see things as they are; that is, I cannot fool myself about myself or situations I am in." *We're on the same wavelength. To be libertarian is to be free to pursue your own inquiry and to permit others to pursue theirs. What is, is. Since this must be true, in the end IF we understand reality, we find agreement as to what it is.*

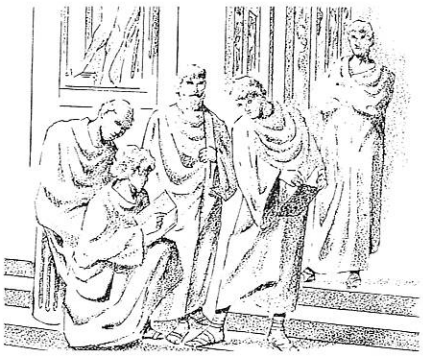
PAUL BILZI: "I don't like political action, either. But I still think it's superior to passively accepting government, and I'd like to see the concept of voting accepted universely." *When you vote, you tacitly accept the idea that some people shall rule other people. I favor freedom; the right of each person to manage his own affairs.*

BOB & GINNIE BLOOM: "We've enjoyed the company of *LeFevre's Journal.* Please accept the enclosed small gift in exchange for your refreshing remarks. As the days go by, we intend to again assist you financially whenever we find it possible. Thanks!" *Your gift and your intention bring out the best in me. My thanks to you.*

DAVID CAMERON: "I'm sending no 'gift' or 'tangible reassurance' (other than this letter). I can't agree with . . . denial of the right of self-defense. A philosopher said, 'All the reasons which make the initiation of physical force an evil, make the retaliatory use of physical force a moral imperative . . . . ' " *I trust you'll read the balance of this issue. And then think about it.*

ROBERT FRENS: "It has been 11 years since that memorable sojourn at Larkspur. I still remember this as one of my finest experiences. You say, 'To keep giving it to you (the *Journal*) I must know that my affection is returned (tangibly).' Why? Is there a principle involved?" *The only principle involved relates to paying for the publication.*

DAN HAACK: "I take violent exception to your 'To Catch a Thief.' Your notion that when a thief steals property belonging to another, the property then belongs to the thief is outrageous and violates every principle that has governed mankind for 4,000 years of recorded history . . . . I never saw anything wrong with the custom of stringing up horse thieves in the old West . . . For awhile I thought I might have something in common with libertarianism, but if you folks believe in coddling the 'rights' of thieves, you can count me out." *And governed badly for 4,000 years! Read the balance of this issue, if you will, please.*

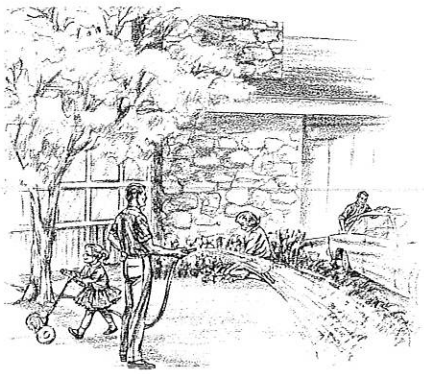


FRANK MEINEN: "I consider the Socratic method of indirectly leading others to think and believe as we do by asking questions, more effective than any other method. The answers elicited will be that person's own — and become difficult or impossible to deny — whereas listening is a passive thing, not requiring assent."

DONALD KERBY: "I want to continue the pleasure of finding your *Journal* in the mail box. Enclosed find my donation in hopes that you will stay on that hilltop ringing the bell for freedom and liberty."

STANLEY LIEBERMAN: "I hope you continue writing for many years to come. I enjoy what you write, and respect your viewpoint even though there are some ideas we disagree about. We are both libertarians, and our fundamental values are the same."

DON MASSELLI: "Your writing reflects the peaceful, happy sense-of-life available to all men once they have discovered the nature of freedom and the means to achieve it. I've much to learn about liberty, but I can always look forward to the day when I may experience the confidence and serenity that appears in the pages of *LeFevre's Journal.*"



RICHARD MAYER: "There are two things wrong with your *Journal.* 1) It invariably is delivered on Saturday — a day I'm supposed to do my yard chores; and 2) it only lasts one day — leaving me nothing to read the rest of the time." *Better to arrive when wanted than to be unwanted upon arrival.*

BENI: "Would indeed appreciate continuing to receive your interesting *Journal.* (Beni) does not think that 'exchange' and 'gift' are at all synonymous so thinks that 'exchange of gifts' while semantically an interesting phrase cannot hope to describe what is happening between us — or can it? But anyway, here is my gift *or* my attempt at exchange, pitiful as it may be (and more when you need it)." *If I were to place a monetary value on* LeFevre's Journal, *then an "exchange" would have to relate to that value. By your making me a gift, which I greatly appreciate, I let you set your own value.*

JUSTIN BRADBURN, JR: "If they drop the atom bomb and *if* we are the only two people on earth alive and *if* the only food on earth was a loaf of bread and *if* you should happen to own it, I would be glad because I would feel that I could steal it from you without getting my block knocked off . . . or would I?" *I don't think I'd like to live here with just you. Take the bread.*

JOHN WALKER: "Too many 'libertarians' want the moral fervor of saying 'all force is wrong' while having another category of force (that is just not called by the name) sandwiched away ready for use. Prudential anarchism becomes a handy device for avoiding hard questions." *Well said.*

DOROTHY WHITE: "My husband is in the construction industry as a working super for the general contractor. Everyone tries very hard to do a good day's work and then is frustrated by 'regulations' which bring everything to a halt. Or else they are stymied by first one trade and then the other striking."

FRANK STELLING: "The best solution would be a president like Ronald Reagan — maybe with Wallace as V.P. But, third parties do not win . . . . I feel discouraged but I shall fight on at that." *I trust that Mr. Reagan and Mr. Wallace are such fine men that they will finally limit themselves to minding their own business.*

BRIAN TOBIN: "The solutions to our society's problems that are being presently tried do not seem to be working. Whether or not your 'solutions' will work remains to be seen. Thanks anyway for proposing something different." *Good. If we must err again, at least let us err with originality.*

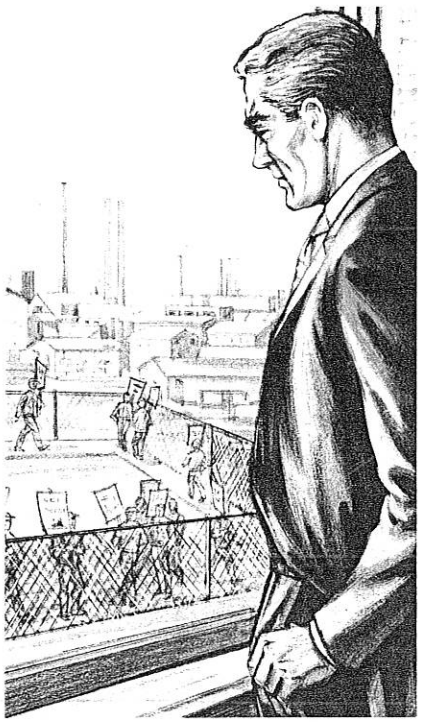
WANDA BELEW: "In St. Petersburg this March I was a candidate for the office of mayor . . . the youngest, and a newcomer to political candidacy. I lost in the primary but the large number of votes I did receive shows that there still exists a strong grass-roots-level strength for the basic principles of honesty and integrity of leadership." *Congratulations on your loss. To love one's country and its people doesn't entail power over them.*

KEN GREGG: "I find I owe you a great deal . . . . I listened, read, found questions answered. I could no longer participate in the political farce. I began to look how problems could be solved peacefully and discovered an entire order of human relations that I'd never noticed before. I think you have put me on the right track."

DAVID EDGAR: "I hope you keep your *Journal* coming. Here's a belated small gift in appreciation."

JOHN KIDD: "Keep those ideas flowing from the press. Your logical consistency just must have an effect in bringing about a universal climate of human liberty and peace."

BOB WHALEN: "Well, you did your usual good job again. So I'm enclosing the latest 'funny paper.' "



DAVID MICHAEL MYERS: "I think you were not 'fair' in your treatment of the two views of theft. It's wrong for the thief to take the goods of the owner. Therefore, it's moral, legitimate, ethical, etc., for the owner to want to recover his property or its equivalent value and perhaps even a little more . . . . I would not demand restitution until I knew beyond reasonable doubt that I had my thief. I would not kill or maim him because I want property from him, not bloodshed . . . . If he won't make restitution, I will take more than equivalent value from him and *dare* him to complain or try to get it back. I'll be waiting for him . . . . If an owner can prove to the unknowing buyer that he has purchased stolen property, then the buyer has a gripe with the thief, not the owner. The unknowing buyer then can proceed to obtain more than equivalent value from the thief, either by public ridicule or by taking from the thief." *Please read this issue all the way through.*

JOHN ZEIGLER: "I've been recommending the *Journal* to all my students and workshop participants. It's exhilarating, inspiring, exciting and moving."

BOB MURPHY: "I only believe coercion should be used against those who initiate coercion and only the amount necessary to stop their initiation of coercion. This is different from governmental agencies in that governmental agencies use coercion against those who do not inititate coercion." *Mankind regresses because so few reason and so many seek vengeance.*

DON GASTINEAU: "Recognizing the governmental power to withhold taxes from income as the largest single roadblock to a successful tax rebellion, please permit me to pose a 'what if' sequence of circumstances. 1) Those who seek not to pay tribute would individually subscribe to a data bank and unilaterally pledge that when, say, 5 million U.S. taxpayers were 'similarly inclined' they would thenceforth cease to pay income tax (conspiracy is avoided: no agreement formed between two or more parties). 2) Upon reaching the target number, subscribers on a given date would confront their industrial relations department with an ultimatum: Cease withholding immediately or lose us (typically the most productive employees). Unwilling to face the loss, companies comply despite governmental pressures. The action is widespread. 3) Those subscribers immediately cease payment of taxes, and jails are insufficient to hold the rebels. Millions follow suit. The law is unenforceable. The monster crumbles. Yea!" *Your idea is better than most. I do see flaws. First, conspiracy can be found in the agreement to cease paying after a specified number enroll. Next, businessmen, backed by government, might employ alternatives. Finally, many other existing laws are unenforceable on a broad base but they remain enforceable under governmental discretionary powers. I recommend withdrawal of sanction through various means as a more practical method toward the same end.*

N. M. CAMARDESE: "Please ever continue to share your inspirations which, in turn, can inspire others."

JIM ROAF: "So many of your comments have caused me to kick myself for not having thought of it myself — keeps my knee joints limber. Now, we may have a couple of differences, unless you have changed, too. First, the meaning of the word 'rights' and then, is any political activity barred to libertarians?" *As a libertarian, I cannot "bar" anyone. As for "rights," read this issue.*

GARY CARLSON: "I hope that your philosophy of individual liberty has the same or even greater effect than the early founding fathers . . . . You may be interested to know that I have founded the Tanstaafl Forum." *Good for you. Keep up the good work.*

IRENE GREEN: "Your summer issue is so to the point I'm finally breaking down and sending a contribution. This illustrates the function of the free market — if the customer is pleased, he purchases the product without coercion."

TOM WRIGHT: "Here is a small token of appreciation for years of mental health and morality. One wonders if, on FTR (federal theft record) Form 1040, one might deduct same as payment for a prescription to cure Acton's disease? What irony if federal play money were obtained to study this unrecognized illness which has plagued personkind since the wheel."

Posters courtesy
A. Reynolds Morse

HUGH WILSON: "Enclosed is my gift which I hope will be sufficient to enable you to continue your work. You are indeed a friend, for your work has taught me how to think freedom."

SAM WINKELMANN: "Enjoyed your *Journal.* I've made notes of some gems before passing it along to my college professor friends."

MARY LOU WOLTER: "The *Journal* reflects my growing personal belief that everything hinges on knowing oneself — one's values, beliefs, capabilities, and limitations. Since 1968, you've been a regular part of our family life. Rarely a day goes by without referral to your concepts — at least in thought."

Mrs. KEITH WRAGE: "If you know of any libertarian group in the Rockford, Illinois area, we'd appreciate learning about it." *The* Journal *doesn't release names of its "non-subscribers," but will be pleased to send to you any responses to your query which come to us from Rockford.*

ANN FITZSIMONS: "I attended your seminar in Carmel Valley (Aug./Sept. '71). As I was fortunate enough to be awarded a scholarship to this seminar, I will repay the favor in a small way. Best wishes for continual success and intellectual growth."

Mrs. F. M. SPENCER: "We saw on TV a news story about a religious settlement struck by cases of diphtheria. These people do not believe in doctoring. A court order sent children to the hospital in spite of the parents' religious beliefs. I'm sure you see my dilemma. All adults should be able to go to their particular hell in their particular handbasket, but where does one draw the line on the little people? Are little people the property of their parents 'til they are strong enough to resist? The nitty-gritty of freedom was brought home to me by this incident. I guess one of the things one learns is that there are no easy or universal answers. Perhaps you have some thoughts on this, to me, difficult problem." *Let each person seek his own solution to his own problem. All will not be right. But you and I will not have imposed our concepts on others. If a person is guilty, let him bear that burden.*

DORIS GORDON: "You said, 'Since government has nothing of its own (at the outset).' What does government have of its own later on? Where is it a true property owner?" *Nearly all properties have been stolen from someone at one time or another. Government is an owner in the same sense any thief is an owner.*

HAROLD GRAHAM: "As long as the thing labeled 'greed' exists in the hearts of humanity (as it also exists in nature), and there is no positive way of changing it, external coercion must be applied to keep a balanced life upon this earth . . . . However, I do go along with your thought . . . none of us wants to be forced to do something we don't want to do, so do not force another to do what he does not want to do." *The person who is truly "greedy" in the sense that he wants more, learns in time that he can get more using honey than with a club. Hurrah for those who want more!*

FRANK McMAHON: "I've read quite a few of your articles and would like more. I've been a friend of Stanley Yankus for 15 years and through him and his associates I have received your material. Keep on working, as you also make us work harder to keep up. All the best."

CHRIS SCHAEFER: "Your *Journal* is *great!!* I only wish there were more."

CAROL PAULING: "I'm working full-time and going to school at nights, and in addition am raising a little one, so I don't have much time. However, I just couldn't stand it if I stopped getting your publication, so *please send it to me!*"

CHESTER GEORGIA: "How about telling us more about yourself? Even though I believe a vegetarian is living more in accordance with natural law, I still am unwilling to practice it. Give me a little more time . . . You have much going for you." *Take as long as you like. You can believe and practice liberty on any diet.*

MARK KERNES: "Your *Journal* is in a class by itself. It's simple, direct, and has caused me to sit back and say, 'Wow . . . of course; how could I not have realized this?' Having met you at Countercon II has helped to convince me. Some people are able to write things they don't believe in, but Robert LeFevre is obviously not that type of person." *My deepest thanks. It's a pleasure knowing you.*

STANLEY YANKUS: "It's my guess that the best thinkers are people who work at the job of improving their thoughts by methods of self-improvement. Good thinkers are men or women who are good people in their living habits."

JOHN CRONE: "Your 'Non-*Journal*' idea was (is!) great. Reminded me to get off my duff (& wallet) so I can keep the free spirit stimulus coming." *I have been most tangibly stimulated.*

CARL OCKERT: "You broke your promise and kept me on your list without a gift! It isn't the stolen article which must be returned, it is the *value*. In fact justice demands *additional* value as compensation for the period of deprivation. It isn't wrong to steal because Bob LeFevre and his disciples *say* it is wrong. Operationally, we learn the idea of 'wrong' from 'that which is punished.' If it is not punishable, it is not wrong! So when you propose to reward theft by letting the thief keep the stolen value, you make theft *right!* With your basic either/or logic about government, i.e., it is needed to protect against naked chaos or not, if that were really the choice, you could perhaps be excused for preferring chaos. But that is not the choice. The choice is between a bad government and a worse one." *Please read this issue carefully.*

Mrs. W. D. REEDER: "I never knew why I was so 'out of step' with the world until I read your writings."

BOB CARLSON: "From my present perspective, the society of free individuals that you envision requires two important assumptions: one, that the majority of men would be, either by nature or proper education, honest and straightforward in dealing with their fellows; two, that the abuse of such people by a minority of unrestrained malevolent personalities would ultimately be less than that now visited upon us by government." *Not a majority — but you.*

RANSOM HUNGERFORD: "You are apparently trying to promote zero government . . . . I believe American government was designed with the intention to help develop individuals to become all that they were created capable of becoming." *I am trying to promote the idea of self-government. Self-government is impossible if the state usurps the function of the individual.*

DAVID GARDNER, M.D.: "In these days of trial for the nation's physicians, I wish I could have all my colleagues exposed to the ideas of libertarianism so that some form of reason, rather than rhetoric, would be used to oppose the machinations of government and insurance companies."

YOU HAVE DONE ENOUGH DAMAGE
FOR ONE YEAR !

You have proven the truth of what Judge Tucker said in 1866:

"No Man's Life, Liberty or Property are Safe while the Legislature is in Session . . . "

1 Tucker 248 (N.Y. Surr.1866)

R. L. Solyom

RICHARD SOLYOM: "I've made good use of your present as you can see from the enclosed, sent today to all New Jersey legislators and newspapers."

ALYN WOLF: "Your *Journal* has often helped clarify my own views. The concept 'freedom' is becoming quite abstract these days. Many must think of you as an anarchist, but I prefer your term, autarchist — 'a believer in individual self-rule.' Your belief (that a violation of any property boundary for any reason is wrong) is a profound statement. Retaliation against a wrongdoer really does increase the wrongness of the whole situation. I'm wondering if full disclosure of wrongdoers through mass media is not also a property boundary violation?"

KEVIN CULLINANE: "One of our students in the Academy of the Rockies during our first year has been having a wonderful time in college with your ideas. His father is a grad of your comprehensive course who heard of AR through your newsletter. We still have openings for one girl and four boys for this year, so if you know of anyone with children or grandchildren who might profit here, invite them to call us."

Mrs. M. S. CROOKS: "Wouldn't it be *wonderful* if we elected a Libertarian President in 1976? It's high time." *To expect political remedy by means of political method is like expecting fire not to burn because the man who lights the fire has good intentions.*

JEREMY SMITH: "I must admit the enclosed is long overdue, after reading so much of your writing during the past 10 years. The exchange of gifts has been heavily in my favor . . . . Please keep the flow of LeFevrian thought coming this way for us to savor."

CHARLES HARTMAN: "Totalitarianism will ultimately fail because it is boring . . . . If life is made better, will not liberty prosper also?" *Possibly. I see no necessary correlation. If life is "better," perhaps. If life is merely longer, that, too, could be boring.*

STEPHEN BEELEY: "Three things: 1) Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it wrong, and applying unsuitable remedies. 2) If 'pro' means *for* and 'con' means *against*, it's obviously a mistake to expect progress out of congress. 3) A check. Best personal regards."

E. L. MIKKELSON: "Let me compliment you on a job well done."

WALTER F. PETERS: "I'll swap with you as often as you indicate such a need."

FLOY JOHNSON: "Re your five questions (spring '75): I heard a comment on TV, 'Liberty is the luxury of self-discipline.' Another time, I noted a famous ballerina stated that the freest muscle was the most disciplined one. Then, I have reflected that the word *discipline* is related to *disciple*, which connotes one who is willing to follow the principles of some teaching. Perhaps, then, self-responsibility is that great discipline which freedom requires to be a luxury to enjoy." *Splendid.*

L. E. COUNTRYMAN: "I would be interested in your analysis whereby you find the Constitution does not put the chains on the use of force except where one has violated his right to life by his evil deeds." *Space doesn't permit a thorough response. Even a superficial examination reveals a document purportedly coming from the people of the U.S. (who in fact had never seen or even heard of it) which provides for a grant of power in an unlimited sense. The word "power" appears 47 times, directly or by literary inference, in the first seven articles, and what is clearly shown is the power of the state to do as it pleases with the people.*

Mrs. DAVID BILLS: "Would it be possible to have your essay printed somehow so that one could keep it and not the comments, etc." *The exchanges appear in the* Journal *because I can't afford the time or the help to do it any other way. Hopefully, the day may come when some of these essays can appear in book form.*

ARTHUR PROSSER, Jr.: "Our federal Constitution *is* an instrument for expansion of unlimited power, almost absolute power. May the day come when true libertarians never have a platform or 'position papers' for rigidly formulating certain tenets, good and well meaning as they may be. We can be unstructured without being chaotic, autarchic without being anarchic." *Hear! Hear!*

DOROTHY SOBEK: "The one area in which I find your writings distinctive above all others is your downright happiness about the whole thing . . . . One can be come extremely bored with despair."

CARL WATNER: "Property, to be the rightful property of someone, has to have some basis on which to exist. If you destroy the right of property, which your assertion that the thief now owns the property does, then what principle do you offer as a substitute by which to regulate the conduct of men in their possession and use of property?" *Please read the current issue thoroughly.*

FLORENCE MOULTON: "Enjoyed every word of 'Legislators Go Home.' Principles make for true justice if followed but we are corrupted by our selfishness to justify morally wrong acts. Media promote selfish ends. Education warps young minds to disobey the Ten Commandments, which are still basic for a healthy economy."

BOB RICHARDSON: "Have read the *Journal* from cover to cover and you have made your point clear, except for one thing: 'The Man Who Knows What Freedom Means Will Find a Way To Be Free.' If you mean sooner or later, I perhaps understand. If you mean that the moment one knows what freedom is, he is free, I do not understand." *"Will find a way" suggests future actions.*

H. B. HAMBLY: "Keep it coming a little while longer! This appeal is the best I have ever seen. Kaddoos to you, and a gold star to boot! While we philosophize and fiddle, Rome burns!"

MARTHA WALASHEK: "Your *Journal* has arrived and I'm very happy to hear from you again — only hope it could be on a monthly basis. Could you spare a few extra copies?"

CONRAD LUCAS: "I've been a sideline observer of your work for 15 years. Keep up your strength, thoughts, will — all it takes to keep the rest of us 'straight.' Is there something I can do actively to help you spread your thoughts?" *Thanks. You're doing it.*

DAVE ROBERTS: "Just keep doing your thing. You remain the person I most agree with in the libertarian movement, *especially* your concept of nonretaliation and lack of enthusiasm for the Libertarian Party . . . . Carmel in '72 will always be one of my fondest memories."

KENNETH RYKER: "I, as one of your students, have been academic dean of Northwood Institute of Texas for the past two years, and my predecessor, Dale Haywood, was also one of your students. For about ten years, hundreds of our students have been influenced by what we learned from you . . . . I'm now a weekly columnist as one more way of spreading the word." *Congratulations, Ken.*

MICHAEL STADELMAIER: "It has taken me a while to grasp just how futile, how self-defeating, resorting to political means actually is." *But you've got it! Cheers!*

EDWARD UNDERWOOD: "If we could have things exactly as we would wish them, the resulting system would be inoperative because we as a whole lack the qualities it would require. I imagine a corrective course should be a reversal of actions which have been responsible for modern problems. It points toward education in general, which is so revered by its victims, an almost total citizenry, as to be almost impregnable." *Bad education is probably at the root of all our difficulties.*

JOHN HARGROVE: "Your winter 'One Man's Point of View,' combining Tolstoy's bees and doubling-math concepts finally 'put it all together' for me. Except for a minor quibble (I believe five years are required to convince a convert, not one), I now see the light at the end of the tunnel." *Each person makes his own intellectual journey at his own speed.*

EDWARD HAVEY: "It's been 13 years since my summer in Colorado, and it's been an interesting life. I have since that time, through discussions, reading, and observations, not found an inconsistency to exist in the libertarian philosophy. I've found existing conditions which make it difficult to function with consistency at times. And yet, I find I am happier, more productive, and I am confident that one day man will become civilized. To help bring about the future I enclose a small contribution toward your efforts." *My deep appreciation for these kind words.*

DOUG ROSBOROUGH: "I so enjoy reading these words of wisdom. It is a breath of fresh air these days to see someone who takes pride in himself and his work, and who is committed to building up — not tearing down."

BILL BROWN: "Here's my *tangible* evidence of support. I still go through my copies of your old *Rampart Journal* with a feeling that we need a revitalizing of that *fantastic* publication. The demise of *Rampart Journal, Left & Right* (Rothbard), and the decay of other libertarian publications has left an unfilled void in American periodicals." *Others are filling the void. Thanks for being tangible.*

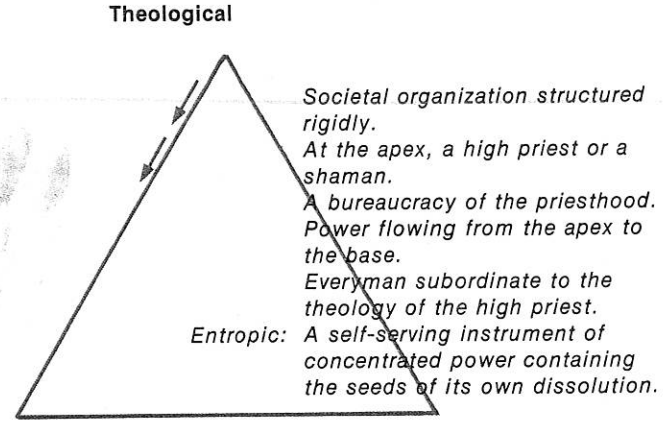
MARY LAUE: "I've often wondered why those who I *thought* possessed principles never could maintain them. Where are there men and women who are competent within themselves and need not control or manipulate others to give themselves a function and purpose? My discovery of your *Journal* has again nursed the glimmering of hope that I have felt all my life — that there may be others who feel the same things I do and desire the right to be themselves among others of their kind." *You must find the integrity and devotion to principle within yourself. If you also happen to locate it in another, it is a marvelous and quite unpredictable bonus. Good hunting.*

STEPHANIE AND DAVID HENDERSEN: "Your *Journal* each time adds a note of intelligence and inspiration to our lives. Clear, consistent thinkers are so very rare!" *As are clear, consistent thinkers among readers.*

THE FREE SOCIETY: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is not possible for human beings to live in relative proximity and to engage in production and commerce without some generally accepted ideas about human behavior. For human beings to survive, commerce and production at some level of effectiveness are required. No one person has enough brains, time, or energy to provide the goods, services, and comforts his well-being requires. Therefore, we must live as neighbors, and not separately. And as neighbors we must cooperate to some degree. To live cooperatively requires the acceptance of some commonly held beliefs. Commonly held beliefs arise from three principal sources. These could be classed as theological, political, or scientific.

If we accept theological beliefs, the pattern of



cooperative living is religious. While theology provides a nearly endless variety of specific rituals and dogmas, the general belief is that man is subordinate to deity or deities. It is presumed that deity tells us what the rules shall be. Certain persons, appointed by themselves or others, arrogate to themselves the role of telling us what deity wishes. Deity rules, the bureaucracy is a priesthood, the servants are the people. Failure to obey the rules is usually met with the assurance that deity will punish. The time and method of punishment are usually relegated to "invisible forces" or to the "next life." Some priesthoods on occasion have usurped the function of deity in matters of punishment, thus anticipating the formation of political beliefs.

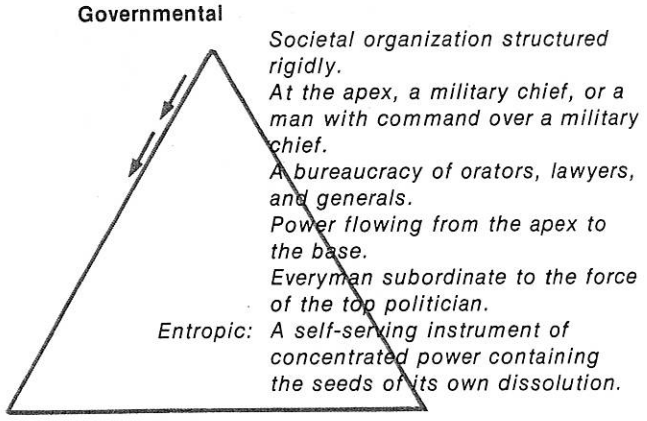
If we accept political beliefs, the pattern of cooperative living is governmental. It is presumed that certain persons, usually called law-makers, will set forth the rules by which cooperative living is to be attained. These persons appoint themselves as law-makers and obtain power by force, intrigue, and propaganda. They maintain their power and authority by various devices, the most cunning of which is called democracy. By democratic processes, those who appoint themselves as rulers practice a ritual in which, by bribery, extortion, intrigue, and propaganda, they create the myth that "the people" approve. Disobedience to the rules is punishable here and now by the visible hand of the law-makers. Governmental living places the "body of law" at the apex; it provides a priesthood of bureaucrats, and the people become serfs.

Both theological and political beliefs have been nurtured into various types of cooperative structures that are hoary with age and rotten-ripe with the destruction of human liberty.

Beginning in America with the Declaration of Independence, the first steps were taken toward providing beliefs which rest on scientific fact rather than upon theological or political foundations. We are nearly 200 years into this experiment, which unfortunately suffered at least partial betrayal beginning in 1789 with the ratification of the Constitution and which has been systematically betrayed ever since by the resurgence of earlier theological and political notions.

Scientific ideas which lead to cooperative living begin with the recognition that every human being has certain inalienable rights.

The concept of human rights is revolutionary. It sets aside all earlier ideas relating to cooperative



living. In the religious form, men obey those who say they speak for deity. In the governmental form, men obey those who say they speak for the "law" or for "government." But when the concept of human rights emerges, men accept the scientifically provable conclusion that no man may correctly speak for another; each speaks for himself.

God is at the apex in the first instance; government at the apex in the second. The individual rises as sovereign over his own person and property in the third. This emergence of man qua man entails the acceptance of beliefs relating to human rights. Without an understanding of human rights, cooperative survival becomes impossible. (It may be important to point out that the word *God* has been employed in the foregoing to indicate an anthropomorphic interventionist focal point of cosmic meddling. But the same word has been used to indicate ultimate truth, scientific findings, or the laws

"THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS"
(*continued*)

of nature. The statements I have employed relating to "God" are intended to be viewed only in the single sense set forth.)

What is a *right?* The word takes the place of either divine or secular edict. A person acts because he has "a right" to act rather than because deity or government told him to act. To have a right, places initiative in the keeping of the individual.

Of necessity, the concept of rights applies universally, just as the concept of divine or secular rule is intended to apply universally. Instead of saying that all men are equal in the sight of God, or that all men are equal before the law, it proclaims that all men are endowed equally with the same rights. This means that no man has or may obtain a right over another man. If rights are universal and if the concept contains the element of equalness, it follows that rights cannot be lost, stolen, traded, or acquired. If a person could lose a right under any given set of circumstances, from that point in time rights would never again be either universal or equal.

What is meant by saying that all men are "equally endowed" with rights? This statement entails the discovery process employing the scientific method. Just as it could be said that water is endowed with the characteristic of being wet, or that wood is endowed with the characteristic of being flammable, so man is endowed with the characteristic of having rights.

Embodied here is the idea that man, by his nature, *has* the ability to think and act on his own volition. This is true regardless of the wishes of any priesthood or bureaucracy. But the concept of rights goes beyond the mere recognition of the individual's capacity to act — although that is included. It also entails the concept that any person has the capacity to act in such a way that he need not obtain permission from other persons.

This is where the idea of moral behavior arises. Moral behavior entails human actions which are volitional in character, and respect the necessary restraints that cooperative living demands. In this sense, a right is the endowed capacity to act volitionally without asking permission and at the same time to refrain from violating the rights of others. Thus, the actor remains above moral censure. The concept of individual human rights contains all these elements.

It follows that if rights are both individually held and universally enjoyed, they constitute a moral understanding; the kind of understanding which

(*continued on page 11*)

ONCE UPON A TIME..... GOLDILOCKS

A Cute Little Blonde, Female, Blunders into the Woods and Gets Lost

Goldilocks, alone in the woods and frightened, wanders about and finally comes upon a house in the forest. She knocks at the door, but the owners of the home are away. What does she do?

Well, she commits an act of breaking and entry. She steals the food of the inhabitants of the home, breaks up their furniture, and goes to sleep in a strange bed.

Presently, the owners come home. Now, this is characteristic of most adult fiction. The owners of anything are the BAD people, and those who own nothing are GOOD. In this case, the owners of the house into which Goldilocks has intruded are BEARS. They are property-owning brutes. Ergo, that's what's wrong with them. They are BAD. Goldilocks, who owns nothing, and is cute, is GOOD.

The bears enter and take inventory, noting the loss of food and the damage to the furniture, and ultimately they discover the little thief asleep in bed. But she awakens and makes good her escape.

The moral of the story is clear. If you are young, cute, and blonde, especially female, you can break in anywhere if you're in difficulty, use whatever you find, break it if you must, and in the end you can escape and remain the heroine.

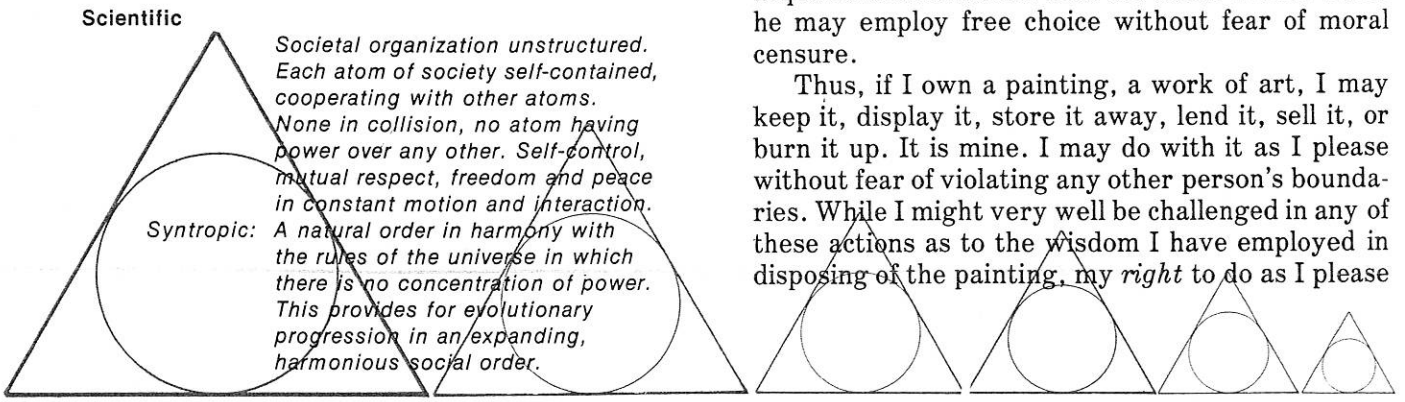
So, at a very young and impressionable age, children are taught by their parents, through the avenue of fiction, that breaking and entry is all right if you're having a problem. Stealing and trespass and vandalism are just fine if you're cute enough to get away with it.

And then we marvel that our youngsters develop hostility toward the property system which we must have if we are to survive.

People believe that fiction is true and that non-fiction is false. I've been writing non-fiction for years and been correspondingly doubted. So I have begun trying to write fiction. Hopefully, if I can master the art and craft of story telling, my fiction will at least carry the credibility of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears." Others seeking to communicate vital truths may find the avenue of children's fiction (in particular) enormously rewarding.

"THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS"
(*continued*)

descends from a comprehension of the true nature of man. A right is, then, a kind of general rule by means of which human beings can interact for purposes of production and commerce, for purposes of raising families and doing other human things, which sets the limits as to what may be morally (correct in terms of natural endowment) done by each without violating the capacity of others to behave in like manner. All rights relate to the individual and since they are universal, they relate to all



individuals. All rights are equal in the sense that no person has or can obtain more or fewer rights than are his naturally.

Thus, it should be seen that a man has a right to his life. This does not mean that he has a guarantee against dying. It means, rather, that he need not ask permission from others if he decides to live. Nor does it means that others owe him a living. What is implied by the term is that a man need not ask permission from others in order to sustain his life. His life could be taken from him. But his *right* to life cannot. The right is unalienable. The life is not.

Of what use is a concept which provides no more than a moral guarantee? It is useful for it provides the single rule necessary for cooperative living. It teaches us the difference between right and wrong, not as a matter of theology, not as a matter of politics, but as a matter of scientific fact. In short, it shows us that a man has a right to his life, and that if we take his life, it is a wrongful act, in terms of the endowed nature of human life.

A man's life is his property, his basic or fundamental possession. All other properties he may acquire are extensions from this central reality. Thus, when we say that a man has a right to property, we are well aware of the fact that any of his properties might be alienated from him in any number of ways. But his right to property cannot be alienated. Thus, if an act occurs which alienates his property against the owner's will, it is a wrongful act by definition. Meanwhile, his right to property is not alienated, although a particular property may have been.

All properties are determined by their boundaries. The boundaries are fixed either by nature or by mutual agreement and understanding. It works out that the violation of a boundary (the crossing of the boundary against the will of the owner) is contrary to the concept of rights. That is to say, it violates the control of the property by the owner. Cooperative living which includes human liberty requires that boundaries of any and all kinds remain inviolate.

Since it is evident that man's capacity to act does not prevent him from violating the boundaries of others, the purpose of the concept of rights is to acquaint the individual with the limits within which he may employ free choice without fear of moral censure.

Thus, if I own a painting, a work of art, I may keep it, display it, store it away, lend it, sell it, or burn it up. It is mine. I may do with it as I please without fear of violating any other person's boundaries. While I might very well be challenged in any of these actions as to the wisdom I have employed in disposing of the painting, my *right* to do as I please with the painting cannot *rightfully* be challenged.

We live at a time when the political structure is dominant and, in consequence, our view of rights has been corrupted and polluted by political intrusion. Politicians called attorneys have redefined rights to make it appear that a right is a privilege bestowed by a government; or that a right is a physical benefit, such as an education, an income, or a job. Had they failed to accomplish this, they would have been compelled to seek other employment.

Now we come to the crux of the entire position of rights. Is it true that a person's life can be taken from him? Certainly, it is true. His life can be alienated, although his right to it cannot be. Can another property belonging to an owner be taken from him? Certainly, it can. The evidence is overwhelming. The person retains his right to own, but a given property is gone. The religious and the political systems for cooperative living have generally recognized the capacity that man has for wrongful action. We must recognize it, too, for it is a fact inevitably occurring in all volitional systems.

In theological or political structures, there is *popular sanction* for a second boundary violation to occur. The wrong-doer must either restore what was taken, or he must be punished for taking it, or both. In order for this to happen, there must be an elite, a priesthood or a bureaucracy, who live above the rule which applies to all others. The priesthood or the bureaucracy, it is argued, may *rightfully* violate the boundary of the wrong-doer. They have a right to do it, we are told, since the owner to the

"THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS"
(*continued*)

property which was wrongfully taken still has a right to *that* property.

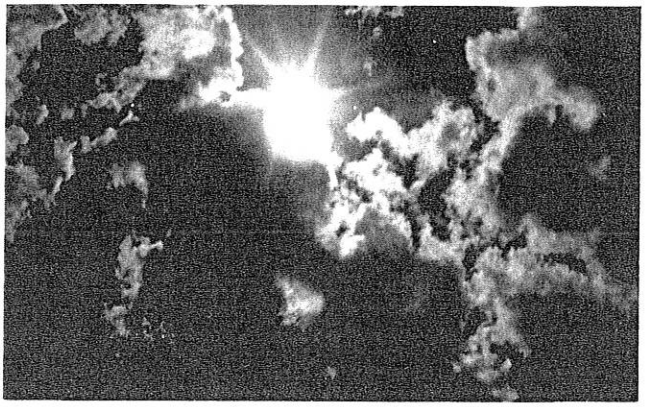
So long as the idea persists that boundaries may be rightfully violated in some cases, we will have to have some men endowed with *sanction from the collective* so that those boundaries may be violated.

The question with which we must deal does not relate to theft; it relates to *sanctioned* theft.

It is probably impossible to outlaw theft. Given the nature of man, however well we plan and however skillfully we prepare in advance, there will probably always be some malfunctioning individuals who will violate the boundaries of others. What is entirely possible is to develop an understanding that theft is always contrary to the rights of man. Until we do, we will have a dual system of morality. We will forever be engaged in saying that the violation of man's boundary is wrong *except* when such a violation is done by the approval of others.

Whether we have licensed thieves called a priesthood; licensed thieves called a bureaucracy; or licensed thieves called the Acme Protection Company, theft has been licensed, approved by some, and perpetrated on others.

If we can develop the concept of rights, then everyone will be opposed to theft, whether it is called taxation, tribute, restitution, or vengeance. Under religious and political forms, theft is only wrong for the people; it is licensed for the privileged elite who claim they have sanction to steal (under one guise or another), and for the benefit of "society." But the greatest benefit that cooperative living requires is the abolition of any class of sanctioned thieves. If attained, we would be outraged by any act of theft.



Our difficulty is that we want our rights respected, but if they are not, then we wish to reserve the right to act directly, or with the help of *sanctioned agents*, in such manner that we repeat, in essence, the heinous act of the one who violated our rights. The net result is that we respect rights not at all. Instead, we respect those who violate the rights and get away with it. And if they do it on a grand scale, we furnish them with honors and cheer them to reverberation.

So long as our present pattern of inconsistency holds, so long will we be governed by other men. Those who wish some to have the right of *sanctioned violation of the boundaries of others* will invariably be victimized by their own beliefs.

If and when we can clear our minds of these ideas and adopt the concept of human rights on a consistent basis, then and then only will we be ready for a free society, one in which the concept of human rights prevails.

LeFevre Journal

Box 2353, Orange, California 92669

LeFevre's Journal is published every quarter, approximately, in Orange, California. It is not for sale, but is supplied to those who are dedicated to human liberty when those so dedicated make it possible.

Publisher ..... Bob LeFevre
Editor ..... Ruth Dazey
Printing and Distributing ..... Bruce Galey
Typesetting ..... Jack Lemieux
Artwork ..... Sandy Hogan

Address correction requested

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 163
Orange, Calif.