



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



FREEDOM

A DEFINITIVE PROPOSAL

There is small wonder that divergent and sometimes contradictory procedures are recommended and followed by those calling themselves "libertarian." The libertarian philosophy is a growing body of thought. No one has, as yet, fully grasped all the ramifications that descend from a condition of being free. Thus, there is no "party line," no catechism, no "I must believe according to . . ." (some authority).

I am not certain that so-called libertarians have even agreed on a definition of what freedom is. If they haven't as yet defined their terms, it is predictable that they will not agree in other particulars. To some, the word "freedom" seems to mean a centrally-administered code by means of which all men shall be free; to others, the word seems to mean the absence of any centralized administration of any kind. With some, the word seems to imply passivity, and even supine surrender in the face of opposition. With others, the word denotes the concept of ultimate military might where freedom can be gained by defeating any power or combination of powers on earth who appear to oppose individual liberty.

As Lincoln once observed: "Some define liberty as the right of a man to do as he pleases with

himself and the products of his labor," while others apparently define the same word as meaning "the right of a man to do as he pleases with other men and the product of other men's labor."

My own approach to the subject is based on the closest possible reasoning of which I am capable. I accept the abstraction that a given item cannot be what it is and what it is not at the same time. Anything is what it is. All of the characteristics of a given item may not be known, and consequently, some characteristics may be overlooked. Nonetheless, what exists, exists. And what anything is is what that thing is.

In trying to understand and communicate in the area of abstractions, I find it helpful to make use of extremes for definitive purposes. To define is to identify conclusively and does not necessarily indicate endorsement.

Thus, for purposes of communication, I would say that beauty is the opposite of ugliness. Hot is the opposite of cold. Good, the opposite of bad. Love, the opposite of hate, and so on and on.

I have deliberately chosen subjective terms in the foregoing. The concept of oppositeness can also be employed in an objective sense. Thus, north is the opposite of south; up is the opposite of down;

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(continued)

genetically, man is the opposite of woman; etc. When we deal exclusively in the subjective sense, no one is sure what beauty is. Or hot, or love or good. But the utility of oppositeness emerges because when a given individual tells us that in his judgment a given item is beautiful, hot, lovable or good, at least we know where his judgment lies and may, by deduction, presume that the opposite of his expressed choices would give us a view of his concept of ugliness, hate, bad or cold.

However, when we make use of objective terms, we can be more precise. In context, we can actually discover true north. Its opposite must be true south. We are not dependent here upon the value judgment of the individual but upon actual knowledge of the nature of the earth and the recognition of the polar axis.

It is my belief that freedom and liberty, although abstractions, are words with an objective orientation. Thus, I believe that a true condition of liberty (or freedom) can be discerned on the basis of knowledge of reality and not on the basis of a given individual's value judgment. I do not believe that libertarians, in general, have as yet confronted the intellectual necessity of grasping this essential. In short, I do not think an understanding of freedom depends upon our likes or preferences. I think freedom is what it is and at the same time it is not what it is not. Whether or not we approve of freedom does not determine the definition of what it is.

If my approach is sound, the question of whether there is a centrally-administered code flies off at a tangent from the real question concerning the nature of freedom. There might or might not be a centrally-administered code. The question would become: "Does the administration or the code violate the nature of freedom, or doesn't it?" Administration or code which does not violate freedom is not antithetical to it. Additionally, passivity on the one hand, or willingness to fight on the other, are not in themselves definitive. The question to be addressed is the same as before. Does passivity violate freedom? Does willingness to fight violate freedom?

The question before us does not entail our likes or dislikes. Whether we approve of the north pole or the south does not cause either to exist or not exist. Whether we like freedom and find it attractive, or despise it and find it reprehensible, are not germane as we seek a definition. The single question we confront is this: WHAT IS FREEDOM?

Employing the abstraction of oppositeness, we must recognize that freedom is the opposite of non-freedom. Unfortunately, this is not helpful. We do not discover what the opposite of north is by saying that it is non-north. East and west are also non-north. There may be many conditions

which are non-freedom which are nonetheless not the opposite of freedom.

In a prior essay on the subject of freedom, I showed that *liberty* is a natural endowment of each individual. All are born in liberty. *Freedom* is a condition in which men live in groups while retaining their natural endowment of individual liberty. To repeat, liberty is the ABILITY of any individual to think his own thoughts and to act on them. When a free man has freedom, he is in a situation in which there are other free men, and none of them violate the natural ability each of them has. (See *LeFevre's Journal*, vol. IV no. 2.)

Liberty, then, can be defined as the natural ability of the individual to think and act as he pleases; but freedom would fall into a social context in which other men are present. Liberty is an individual attribute, but freedom would be a social attribute. Therefore, to find a word denoting the opposite of freedom, we must find another word having a social context.

A number of words might serve. I have chosen the word coercion. It means to compel by force without regard for the individual's volition or desire. Thus, a condition of freedom is at one end of the spectrum of possibilities; coercion at the other. Freedom would be the absence of coercion. It matters not at all who is coerced or who is coercing. Freedom is gone when coercion is present. Therefore, freedom can be defined as the absence of coercion.

It follows that, given the nature of man, we are hardly likely to experience a threat to our liberty, unless at birth we are mentally or physically impaired so that we cannot think our own thoughts or do not have the ability to act on them. What is in constant danger is our freedom.

It would follow, if these definitions are accurate, that a libertarian would be an individual endowed with liberty who favors freedom and does not favor coercion for any reason. It would also follow that many people calling themselves "libertarian" are merely using the word in an inaccurate context. They do not really intend to achieve freedom, but something else instead.

The principal excuse offered which prevents people from accepting the preceding definition is that they don't think a condition of freedom is "practical." I find arguments of this sort peculiarly void of strict and careful reasoning. They are a bit like the arguments of a person who, finding that the north pole exists under arctic conditions, says: "I don't like the conditions, let's re-define the north pole as being in some more friendly climate."

The north pole is where it is whether we approve or not. Freedom is what it is whether we seek to embrace it or flee from it in terror.

Most persons recognize that government is a legally established and popularly supported agency of coercion. When it is pointed out that government

invariably and predictably will act to impair the liberty of the individual and thus to prevent a true condition of freedom from appearing, they argue in this fashion:

1. If a condition of zero government were either possible or desirable, why don't we have it now?
2. If we had it at a prior time and it is desirable, then what caused it to disappear?
3. If every human being agreed that liberty is "natural" and that freedom is a state of non-coercion, clearly no government would be needed. But it is impossible for all men to agree. They have never agreed as yet that two plus two makes four. Nor have they agreed that the world is round. There is no universally-held view economically, socially, politically or theologically. But if a single person disagreed as to the nature of freedom or the desirability of freedom, would it not follow that such an individual would be in a position to impair the liberty of others? And, if so much as a single act of coercion ensues, by definition, freedom is lost. Therefore, freedom isn't practical.
4. If all men were good, government would not be necessary. But all men are not good. Therefore, isn't government necessary to punish those who impair the liberty of others, or to protect the "good" from the "evil"?
5. Suppose in a specific location all men voluntarily agreed to accept the definition of freedom offered and in consequence, promised to produce and trade with each other by peaceful means. But let us suppose that some are more skillful than others, which appears to be the rule. Some who produce and trade succeed but others do not. Will not those who fail, become hungry and possibly be driven to impair the liberty of others? Would they be likely to keep their promises? And even if they had agreed in advance in the most solemn way to voluntarily submit to punishment, if they are apprehended while violating the liberty of another, is it conceivable that they would never change their minds? Would not the individual who has violated the liberty of another nonetheless resist any attempt at his own punishment? Would he not rationalize his position and declare that his liberty should not be violated even though he has violated the liberty of another?

Nearly all of the foregoing objections underscore the difficulties of achieving a state of freedom, but they do not change its definition. Freedom is what it is regardless of the difficulties in reaching it. I will readily concede the difficulties. What most seem to want is a definition which will make freedom easier to attain. It is not easy to attain. To the best of my ability, the compass I have devised points to true north. If any other direction is fol-

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lowed, an arrival at true north is unlikely.

Let me deal with the questions in chronological order.

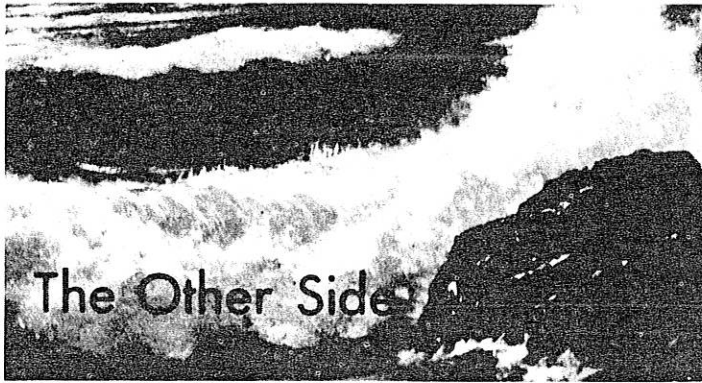
1. Zero government is possible and has been attained in prior times under isolated and unusual circumstances, for small groups of persons. Indeed, there is evidence that at the present moment in various remote and isolated places in the world, there are small groups managing to survive and to survive well without government. A state of freedom has never been attained, to the best of my knowledge, by large diversified groups having an industrialized economy and engaged in major productive efforts and in major trading efforts. This does not say that it cannot be done. It says that, to date, so far as is known, it has not been done.

The fact that no major nation of which we have knowledge has ever existed without government does not prove that existence without government is impossible. It merely establishes that the difficulties are real. Nor is the statistical evidence of failure conclusive. It never is. Prior to the flight of the Wright brothers at Kittyhawk, all prior efforts in motor-driven, heavier-than-air craft had failed. Statistically, the Wright brothers couldn't fly. But fly they did when they successfully analyzed and met their difficulties by surmounting them. They had to abandon hope of an "easy" way to fly. They had to "define" the flow of air currents accurately, not merely in such a way as to make it easy.

It might also serve to point out that a number of things once existed which were desirable and hard to attain, which we presently do not have. Man's forward motion, if it occurs, is neither steady nor assured.

2. When the question is asked concerning the disappearance of the groups which had no government, I must respond by showing that groups having governments have also disappeared. I might point out that the Hanging Gardens of Babylon don't exist now, either. The mere presence of a government does not guarantee the continued existence of anything. How could Rome have fallen since it had a government and a "good" one by standards known at the time? Nor does the absence of

(please turn to page 11)



JACK ADAM: "With your letters in *POWER OF CONGRESS*, I had a very difficult time with my anger in reviewing the answers you received from the Congressmen. I have a sincere appreciation of your logic, consistency, and direct approach. I have an appreciation for their answers when the core was finally opened. Their silence was sufficient.

"Then, last night my copy of *LIFT HER UP, TENDERLY* arrived. I started reading through it at 10 p.m. I read a couple of chapters, apparently not thinking too deeply at the time, and then proceeded to go to bed. The book kept coming to my mind. I arose at 1 a.m. and finished the book at 5:30 a.m.

"I want to tell you what a splendid book I think it is and how fortunate I consider myself to have had the opportunity to expose myself to a person with your clarity of thought. I am indeed happy that you have been selfish enough to have prepared yourself to be able to clarify an extremely complicated subject in such simple terms. My hearty congratulations."

PIPI BATES: "I am no longer registered to vote and will think long and hard before I do so ever again. You make sense, Bob."

MONA BEARDSLEE: "I do so enjoy your stimulating *Journal*. I can't read without a pencil and manage to scribble all over my own reading material and sometimes make rather long notes. Following are some comments I made on reading your spring '77 *Journal*:

"The price of liberty is eternal effort,' you say in your answer to Edward Underwood. That's beautiful, Bob. Intriguing difference between it and the usual 'vigilance.' The latter implies watching others (the government) to prevent being fleeced as though our liberty were dependent upon and in the hands of government—a negative approach—whereas eternal effort puts liberty squarely up to the individual

and bears out your motto that 'the man who knows what freedom means will find a way to be free.'

"Enjoyed your *LIFT HER UP, TENDERLY*. Was particularly interested in your final theory about the human species growing up—to leave the family (government). And then there's something which bothers me. I've heard it before and was a little surprised to see it in your book: ' . . . we have the exact kind of government and the exact kind of economy that we've demanded. We created both.' Bob, who are 'we'? You and I? Can you explain?

"Do you happen to know offhand who said, 'To sin by silence makes cowards of men?'"

I used the word we in its broadest sense. I mean people, human beings. Obviously, many individuals did not and would not participate. Respecting the quotation, I have been unable to find it precisely as worded. William Hazlitt said something similar.

CHARLES T. BLACKWELL: "I would like to contact those on your South Carolina mailing list for a potential 'Annual LeFevre Picnic' or some other get together. It is kind of lonesome in small towns when one is in tune with that 'different drummer.'"

I cannot provide a mailing list. However, those in South Carolina who are interested might contact Mr. Blackwell at Box 792, York, South Carolina 29745.

ART BLAZEY: "After reading your 'Freedom Philosophy' in Spring issue of your *Journal* last week I got to the May *Freeman* and found the review of your latest book therein.

"So, I again take this opportunity to compliment you on the excellent work you have been doing to preserve a precious gift for mankind."

VIRGINIA BLOOM: "Through the publications of the Living Love Center in Berkeley, I've recently been working at accepting responsibility for everything I experience. It was re-

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The Mail List is being streamlined. Beginning with the winter '77 issue, only those who have helped with 'gifts' will receive the *Journal*. Reasons are many; regrets, too, if we lose you!

freshing to see the same philosophy reflected in 'Psychic Aggression.'

"I'm slowly discovering that no one can upset, frustrate, anger or control me; I upset, frustrate, anger and control myself. And all those outside forces I've so comfortably blamed for my actions actually have had nothing to do with the fact that it's been I who have made the choices to accept or reject their influences. It's a tough lesson to learn."

WILLIAM BOCKOVEN, M.D.: "I have been enjoying your *Journals*, although I am in disagreement with you on several points, one of which, I guess, is illustrated by the fact that I am the immediate past-chairman of the Libertarian Party of Iowa. The expression of libertarian ideas, especially when in some areas it is different from my own, is very important to my own understanding. Even though I disagree with the extreme pacifist's position and feel that the Libertarian Party may be a helpful approach, I think your position on both of these issues has been very helpful to me in seeing the dangers that might befall the Libertarian Party. Also the dangers involved with the various coercive measures that might be involved, and the dangers involved with all sorts of coercion.

"I think that we, all, and I must include myself, have a little difficulty understanding that our own view may not be perfectly correct and the importance of certain areas to us individually may keep us from the whole picture."

Congratulations on an open and inquiring mind.

N. M. CAMARDESE, M.D.: "Your spring issue was superbly splendid. A masterpiece!

"The delivery of your articles was in such a fashion as to activate one's intellectual molecules as if of necessity.

"It is in the realm of human thought (to subjectively and accurately appraise the objectivity of facts and reality, particularly as furnished by history)

that ought to give man on the one hand the real possibility and plausibility to safeguard the level of freedom extant and, on the other hand, the infinite potential towards ascendant progress.

"The problem? Greed, jealousy, fear, affective environmental conditions, sloth, apathy, mistrust, and so many other negative forces to which we are all heir.

"Yet faith, trust, love, charity, humility, enthusiasm, zeal—these are even naturally indwelling positive forces."

MRS. JOHN CORBIN: "My husband has been receiving your *Journal*. He says he didn't subscribe: As I believe it is the most unAmerican and disgusting in this country today. It is too bad this country's Constitution protects it. I suppose your evil intent is not to be prosecuted. I do not want this coming to my mailbox. Do not send any more.

"This is the greatest country on earth with the greatest people."

It has been discontinued. I agree that America and its people are great. It has a very bad government in spite of this.

JOHN GIACONA: "The *Journal* gets better with each issue."

DORIS GORDON: "You said in vol. IV, no. 2 in a reply to Bill Best, 'If the fetus is a human being, abortion is murder.' . . . You went on to state, 'If the fetus is property owned by the mother, or the mother and father, the owners may dispose of it as they wish.' I submit that this statement neglects the issue of what sort of thing or being the fetus is. Property can't be property unless it is something first. People, of course, cannot be property of anyone but themselves from a moral point of view. What is the fetus but people?"

I am not as wise as Doris Gordon. I do not KNOW what the fetus is. The position I take is unavoidable in my state of ignorance.

ROBERT HAWKINS, M.D.: "Although it is true that anarchy means 'without' government and that anemia means 'without' blood, I prefer to think of the former term as I regard the latter (from a clinical point of view): less than average in amount. As an illustration, the country of Liechtenstein must suffer from anarchy as it has less than a dozen policemen in service in the entire country. In the USA, we need at least that many policemen to do any assignment (other than arresting speeders and stop sign violators).

"To illustrate I would draw a square and divide the square into four quad-

rants. The top line would be labeled 'Constitutional Republic (isocracy or isonomocracy).' The opposite or bottom line would be labeled 'Democracy (polyarchy).' The left line would be labeled 'Interventionism (omniarchy),' and the right-hand line would be labeled 'Laissez-faire (anarchy).'

PHILIP HUGHES: "Thanks so much for continuing to send me your priceless *Journal* — in spite of my failure to show my thanks for your wise writings and counsel by supporting you financially. Enclosed check is gladly given.

"I am considering the results of the elections and my efforts to try to instill a greater understanding of basic, fundamental truths will continue, aided by your words and thoughts. I agree that political action is not the answer, but politics does show us what a long way we have left ahead of us in our effort to help others to learn the true meaning of freedom."

DAN JACOBSON: "Summer '77, vol. IV, no. 3. Best issue to date — at least in my opinion."

CHARLES F. JONES: "I greatly appreciate having been exposed to your philosophies; and I agree with other followers of your point of view, that living by these philosophies gives me greater peace of mind in my daily affairs. I want to share these viewpoints with others, but most people have been so brainwashed (if you will allow the term) into believing that the U.S. government is like unto none but the Bible in its absoluteness and goodness that, when anything at all to the contrary is broached in a conversation or friendly debate, they tune out completely!!! This is, to me, quite unfortunate, because it shows how far down the road to complete government control we have come, and how far we have to go to achieve individual freedom.

"A second problem I wrestle with is in practical application of libertarian philosophy in a society so degraded that we must legislate the difference between right and wrong — and no one seems to recognize the ludicrousness of such a situation!!!

"I will resolve these problems for myself — I must — and continue to 'spread the word' that liberty is possible. Keep up the good work."

JOHN M. KELLY: "In 'Psychic Aggression' you define violence and point out that two types of interpersonal conduct are involved . . . I thought this was sharp thinking, but it skirted the point I was seeking and I

found it in the negative.

"You say, 'The desire of a person to control the actions of another may lead to misrepresentation, lying, and subtle forms of persuasion and pressure. But when these non-physical means are employed . . . no physical harm is implicit.

"But what about the 'mental' harm? . . . if a person is given a single account . . . and has no ready access to a contrary opinion, is he prone to accept the account given? Does this entail mental harm? Not really,' you conclude, 'although it may result in false conclusions.'

"You end your analysis with, '. . . the individual is not injured by the liar; if injury results, he is injured by his own acceptance of a falsehood.'

"Now to my point.

"A libertarian friend and I clashed on the same issue about a year ago. We agreed that any initiated force constituted coercion as well as its threat; or the use of a third party (gang or government). Then I hypothesized: 'I know something of which you are not aware. I know that if you knew the truth, you would not go through with a deal I'm proposing; it would be to your disadvantage. Would my silence constitute coercion?'

"He was very emphatic that silence is not a form of coercion, although the audience's response indicated they didn't agree.

"I pointed out that if I attempted force, he had every right to counter with force. (While I agree, 'protecting one's property' has become a fetish with libertarians.) If I should threaten, he could counter-threaten. If I employed third parties, he could seek support from others. But if I attacked him through his intellect, what defense could he make?

"I can understand one who does not believe in a supreme judge of our intent (my friend is an atheist) taking that position. After all, if the top banana is man, and he can judge the intent only on the basis of action, he is home free with any underserved benefit, so long as he *does* nothing to be judged.

"But if man is anything better than an animal, the betterment is not to be found in his physique, but in his intellect and spirit; in his ability to reason toward justice. In that context, I consider an attack on me through my intellect, by deception, to be the most reprehensible sort of coercion. In that area I am the most vulnerable. It is worse than stealing from a cripple. The cripple

ple can yell, the ignorant can only suffer.

"Bob, are you saying that, where I can assuage suffering by imparting knowledge of a fact, I can justly withhold it because it is to my benefit to do so?"

I find lying reprehensible and never recommend it. Because I know that some may lie, causes me to weigh with care what others say. Not only is it possible for lies to be told, it is possible for persons to make mistakes. To assume that others are responsible for my conclusions is to assume that a teacher, right or wrong, is responsible for the actions of his students. On that basis, no student would ever be responsible, either as a student or as a graduate. All responsibilities shift to the dead past and our progenitors are responsible for the information and mis-information they passed to us. I suggest a re-reading of "Psychic Aggression" in the summer Journal.

JOHN KIDD: "Would the freedom of prisoners be enhanced IF prisoners could select their warden by secret ballot?"

Not if they remain in their cells.

FRED LUSK: "Please do not send me any more of your literature of any kind. I am *not* interested in it or in you. I immediately burn it."

I'll send no more. And I'm not burned up about it. I favor your freedom to select your own hot and cold.

W. E. LYMAN: "When I reached 70 years after a life of hard physical work, I decided to give up the hardest part and take Social Security. I did not do this with a clear conscience. But government was spending huge sums in the worst possible ways, and I justified myself by saying I will spend this money against them. I contributed to many organizations and individuals in need, subscribed to papers and magazines, bought books and reprints for distribution, and wrote letters. This last year costs exceeded income (earlier years averaging about even). But this current dispensation doesn't satisfy me, the danger ahead is too great. Yet I can't afford more. Perhaps you can offer some help. Government is coercing us, or me, as you would say, and I, it. We are working at cross purposes for freedom."

If our purposes or methods are crossed, we checkmate ourselves. You will experience a clear conscience and new purpose if you can manage to remove the inconsistency.

JOHN McCARVILLE: "Please start subscription with current issue —

summer '77 . . . The truth on how major wars are financed and promoted and on finance banking needs exposure and it is overdue."

You are now a non-subscriber, John. We have no subscribers. And thanks for the suggestion.

WILLIAM MARGOLIS: "It's much nicer sending you a gift than a tax to IRS!

"Thank you for your *Journal*. I always enjoy it and am moved to THINK by it. I especially appreciated your semantic clarifications in 'The Philosophy of Freedom' (Spring '77); and even more specifically your exclusion of denotation of mobility of action from what is denoted by liberty: being a paraplegic does not affect my liberty! I've denied that, but now cannot. And have begun efforts to reassert my responsibilities.

"That leads to your essay 'How Can We Do It?' I was about six when my mother was secretary to Howard Scott of Technocracy, Inc. and my father, an agronomist, an 'authorized' lecturer; and I remember from those early years that people asked why the political route was not used. The stock answer was, 'Events are in the saddle!' As World War II approached, the ideology changed somewhat and my parents left Technology, Inc.

"As I grew up, those early lessons stayed with me, eventually taking form in phrases like 'the ends pre-exist in the means,' and later, *re* anarchism, 'we must act now in ways that are in accord with the ways we desire society to act when there is no state.' I've not always (even now) been self-disciplined/wise/imaginative enough to manage to do that; but I keep seeking and trying. (And, of course, your *Journal* is a continuing teacher and prod!) And this, in turn, leads to the third essay, 'Levels of Understanding.'

"I am not so certain as you of the limits of the possible and probable. The predictable may, or may not, be so limited. This used to be considered a matter of faith and religion; but in recent years, since Heisenberg, Einstein, and, more recently, studies with meditative practices, both of the East and the West, with biofeedback, with work in 'imaging' done with persons having 'ordinary' diagnoses of terminal cancer, the separation between 'objective' body and 'subjective' mind has come into question by those with 'ordinary' scientific educations, degrees, practices, etc."

SUSIE MOLLISON: "Have been remiss sending you some dollars for

your *Journal*, which I continue to enjoy and learn from. I thank you for your teachings and your friendship *every* day *all* year long!

"I regret to say that I have not always appreciated 'The Other Side,' preferring your columns. That indeed has been my folly, because upon close reading, including back issues, I feel once again as though I were in one of your classes, a part of the back and forth dialogue which I found such rewarding learning.

"Am also thankful you made some written sense out of this 'psychic aggression' fad prevalent now in libertarian print. I get really annoyed at what appears to me to be laziness regarding parental responsibility using this concept. I cannot comprehend how one can rationalize oneself out of child guidance this way. It must be because so few people appear to know how to *request*, preferring instead the ego power trip of *command*. Maybe it's time for a paperback edition of RAISING CHILDREN FOR FUN AND PROFIT!

"Wish I could send what your work is really worth, but am doing my best to earn it!"

SHIRL MOON: " 'Don Quixote,' I am just as crazy as you are! I read what you put in the *Journal*."

PHIL O'CONNELL: "Concerning your article 'How Can We Do It?' the best solution I have found is: participate in and promote the free enterprise exchange system. Encourage everyone to enter the field of business where there is no coercion. It is in business that you learn the art of persuasion rather than coercion. Where you produce and exchange rather than take and give. It is the noblest of all callings, for without-you, there would be nothing for human consumption and nobody to consume it, even if it is just picking a berry off a bush or a good idea and giving it to someone else in exchange for something they have. (The alternative: hitting them over the head with a club and taking what they have.)"

CARL OCKERT: "In accordance with the rules you have established for financial support of your *Journal*, I am sending my contribution. This is my first contribution. I generally disagree with you to the point of being totally exempt from any desire to contribute. But your fine article on psychic aggression has changed that situation, at least temporarily.

"After writing the enclosed letter (above) and check, I couldn't resist reading the rest of your *Journal*. In-

stead of tearing up the check, I will content myself with asking you two questions:

"1. If 'no government' is possible and beneficial, it must have been at least tried sometime in the history of mankind. How did it get overthrown? By one man who desired slaves?"

"2. Suppose a group of people want to trade with each other but each is a crook. Suppose they voluntarily agree to be 'punished' physically any time they get caught doing something crooked, even if, at the time they get caught, they change their minds. Do people have a right to make such a permanent contract?"

See: "*Freedom — A Definitive Proposal*" starting on page one.

JAMES PIGOTT: "Here is my check with a little help for your efforts to send us the *Journal* and to cover the price of one copy of *LIFT HER UP, TENDERLY* which I am really sure will cut deeply 'through the pettifogery, the rhetoric, and the demagoguery' the political media pour at us from every way to take us back to the pick and shovel days."

CLELL PORTER: "Thanks to a pay raise I'm able to make this gift a bit larger . . . I won't pretend it fairly compensates you for being originally responsible for planting the conceptual seed of true liberty in my mind. I was saddened to read that you must shorten your gift list to only those who reciprocate since it's the non-reciprocators who probably stand to be most revolutionized by it. (I'll refrain from saying, 'They need it the worst' since I'm in no position to judge others' needs.) However, I understand that government monopoly over money production and mail delivery makes your action necessary. Isn't it strange that government pretends to hate monopolies while itself — the only real monopoly — zealously guarding its 'right' to so cruelly mismanage those things under its direct control? Well, perhaps not 'strange,' given an understanding of political motive. I especially rejoiced in your 'How Can We Do It?' I hope those impatient to 'do something' will understand that if they themselves come into full understanding of what liberty really is, they will have *already* 'done' more than has been accomplished by all the wars in history."

ARTHUR E. PROSSER, JR.: "Your italicized replies to the pointed questions by critics hone and sharpen true libertarian philosophy to a fine, keen edge. Paradoxically, it embraces

a broad spectrum touching Kant, Socrates, Thoreau, Gandhi, Darwin . . . even Augustine, Paul and Jesus. Whether liberty is from natural law or from God, through the Holy Spirit or through human ego (neo-gnosticism), we all agree liberty is intuitive and never discursive, never conferred by a coercive state of imperfect men.

"Let's keep 'libertarian philosophy' in lower-case letters. This way, individual liberty and societal freedom are maieutic self-discoveries. Simplistic labels and handles like 'anarcho-pacifist' are cop-outs for lazy people afraid to think."

RUSS RUEGER: "I was most happy to receive your wonderful publication in today's mail. It served several purposes for me, over and beyond the usual philosophic illumination it always provides.

"First, it reminded me that I'm long overdue in my 1977 contribution to the *Journal*, and I've taken care of that.

"Second, it reminded me that there are, at least somewhere, men and women who embody the spirit of independence, self-help, and liberty."

SARAH RYAN: "Enclosed is our check — small in comparison to the enjoyment we derive from your *Journal*, but we wanted you to know we are thinking of you and have looked forward to every issue we have gotten."



FRANKLIN (and SUSAN) SANDERS: "Your summer '77 issue has sparked a discussion between my wife and myself which would profit greatly from your comments.

"In 'Psychic Aggression' you treat tangentially the predicament of the parent *vis-a-vis* the child. Although this is not the central problem which you examine, it is for us, with two very young children, a very important one.

"How does the parent 'control' the child — not of course, in the sense you use the word in your article, but in the sense of keeping his behavior from the

edge of savagery and helping him become a decent and effective human being?"

"Succinctly, the problem may be defined thus:

"1. How does one teach a child effectively to obey (internally and externally) without servility and blind willing acceptance of authority —

"2. Without doing that same sort of violence to the child which one condemns in others?"

Patience with children is the first requirement. To teach, one must get the child's attention. To inflict a momentary physical sensation on the child to obtain his attention can have beneficial results. To whip the child as punishment is usually the product of parental frustration. To beat the child is a form of battery and utterly uncalled for. Usually, the employment of pain to enforce a parental dictum teaches the child an incorrect lesson. He learns that when he is bigger he can do the same thing you do. What you must seek is open communication. What you must avoid is punishment, vengeance, and, of course, violence.

LOIS SARGENT: "Keep hammering away at your basic ideas. Maybe in time they will take hold of the public; then Congressmen will be retired automatically."

CHRIS SCHAEFER: "I would like to share with you and your readers some thought on 'liberty and freedom' I found in a book called, *THE BLAZING DAWN*, a story dealing with the Alamo, by James Wakefield Burke.

"Your *Journal* is one of the few things I look forward to getting in the mail every few months. I wish it were MORE FREQUENT."

The quotes from the book were excellent, Chris, and I wish I could have reprinted them. To do so would have violated the property rights of the author, James Wakefield Burke. May I, instead, recommend the book.

MICHAEL SOWERS: "Enclosed is my check and I extend to you my thanks.

"Keep the *Journal* in my mail box; I value it and look forward to reading it when it comes."

JOHN STRIKE: "I sure miss you and the good meetings we used to have. Your teachings have always had and still do have a profound effect on my life.

"I'm living in Cincinnati. Sure would love to hear you teach again. Any ideas as to how it can be arranged?"

Sure. Organize a seminar. I'd be delighted to make it a part of my schedule.

THE HEEL OF ACHILLES

From what I construe to be "a reliable source," information has reached me that several persons long thought to be leading "libertarians" have recently denounced the "libertarian movement." The reason for this denunciation is given as disappointment that after eight years of effort, the so-called Libertarian Party has failed to gain sufficient footing to become a major political force in the United States.

This apparent failure is, from my point of view, a fantastic victory and a reassertion of the true nature of the libertarian position.

Those seeking political employment and power often excoriate those who believe in freedom by charging that they are too idealistic; too concerned with philosophy; too eager to discuss doctrine, and not willing to take "practical steps" at the polls.

The one thing that marks the libertarian position as deserving of thoughtful consideration is its ideals. Remove them, compromise them or simply abandon them, and an individual, to be "practical," might be well advised to enter the ranks of either of the two existing major political parties. Of course anyone can always contend that either Republicans or Democrats have strayed so far from a sound economic or fiscal policy that these parties have become useless. But the fact is that these political parties are both durable, in the sense of longevity, and flexible, in respect to platforms. Nor is there any more conflict arising in them than arises among libertarian groups when compromise and re-direction are suggested.

In short, if a given person is interested in holding office and "doing good" politically, he should be advised to get into a group which knows the ropes, has a track record, and is always looking for credibility and reform options.

The greatness of the libertarian position is not that it has potential as a political party. The greatness of the libertarian position is that it offers an a-political stance, an intellectual position that is above party and beyond the search for power. When this is stated, political activists, who constantly seek to corrupt the libertarian position in an effort to arrive at power, charge that politics is the "practical" way to get things done.

I will contend that political action is NOT the practical way to get libertarian things done. Political action is predicated upon one's ability to sway masses of people. The swaying is accomplished by offering "benefits" of one kind or another. Those contending that they are libertarian seek to attract those who want less government and seek to persuade them to vote in that direction. They are hopeful that more people want less government than favor more government. Therefore, they seek majority approval so they can reduce the amount

of government we presently have.

The numbers of persons wanting the THEORETICAL benefit of less government, contrasted with the numbers of persons wanting CONCRETE government jobs, money, security, advantages, cash on the line, medical care, education, protection, loans, and so on and on, will be small.

This is readily predictable. And while it is conceivable that, under special circumstances, in a given local situation, a majority might just opt in favor of less government, it is easy to foresee that the concrete advantages that can be available NOW will assuredly look more alluring to the masses than the theoretical advantages of having a lower tax and fewer controls at some future time, maybe.

Additionally, a smaller government offers no guarantee against future governmental expansion. The American government was small at one time. Why get all steamed up for a temporary reduction in size, when at any later time, those in power could re-enlarge it? Furthermore, if a given orator and political power seeker is capable of swaying the masses in his direction, another orator and political power seeker can come along afterwards and sway the masses back again.

Thus, the voting public is like a field of grain swaying before each political wind. And the general direction will predictably be in favor of more CONCRETE benefits handed out as political favors. This is always the prevailing political direction. Only at rare intervals does a contrary wind move in favor of ABSTRACT advantages, such as less in the way of government itself.

Thus, the libertarian political position is predictably a losing position. Why take it? The only purpose of waging war is victory, as General MacArthur candidly stated. And politics is a war waged with ballots instead of bullets; but a war all the same.

The libertarian, however, can achieve political objectives, if he adopts the definition of freedom as described elsewhere in this *Journal*. The means he employs must be in harmony with the ends sought. If he seeks a position in which less power is to be used, he must employ methods which, in themselves, do not call for majority approval nor the amassment of power, even "libertarian power." To make such an achievement, at least a modest understanding of the nature of government is required.

There are a number of prerequisites if a government *de facto* is to exist. Without seeking to tabulate and define all of these requirements, let me turn to the two most important. One of these is power. Government must have at its disposal an agency capable of physical enforcement of its edicts. Loosely, this is referred to as the

“police” power.

Men who enact legislation but have no means of enforcing it are engaged in a futile exercise. Ordinary human beings are not going to obey the whims and vagaries of others unless compulsion is present. And the compulsion must be practical. The populace at large must be made to feel and believe that if they fail to obey a single edict, someone will make an appearance who has the capacity to enjoin compliance by force. Thus, one of the arms of government is the police power. The other seems almost to contradict the first, but it is not a contradiction and is as necessary as force, if a government is to succeed.

The correct name for this second prerequisite is “sanction of the victim.” What is meant is this. Regardless of whether we have a dictatorship or a democracy or any other form of government, the public must approve of that government. This means that government is not raw and naked force alone. A military organization would be. But a military organization, an army, navy, or whatever, depends solely on its ability to coerce and is not government.

Now, any political party that offers enough benefits will achieve a following. That is to say, those who like what is offered will readily sanction and approve of that party. But the real “hat trick” of government is its ability to win the approval and hence the sanction of the very people who are NOT going to obtain benefits. Indeed, for a government *de facto* to emerge, the very people who are to be taxed, regulated, and injured by the government, and who know they are to be thus injured, must also give their approval. This is *sanction of the victim*.

Without getting into the details, which have been covered in other issues of *LeFevre's Journal*, suffice it to say that government is that peculiar agency which manages by force on the one hand and by political devices on the other to win the approval both of those who are to be benefitted under it and those who are to be injured by it. These are the twin arms of government: force and



“sanction of the victim.”

If an individual wishing to reduce the size of government or to get along without it totally, attempts to take on the government by forceful means, he is, in my judgment, impractical. I could use a stronger word. As an individual he has no more chance of defeating the force of government than he has of flying to the moon by flapping his arms. Of course, if he conspires to create an agency of force powerful enough to defeat the existing forces of any government, then he becomes more dangerous than the government he seeks to reduce or eliminate. Either he can and does defeat the existing government or he fails in the attempt.

The government of Russia under the tsars was a tyranny and greatly to be feared. A forceful revolution occurred and overthrew that government. The new government of Russia is larger, more powerful, and more intransigent, more dangerous by far.

The government of George III of England was defeated in the colonies by French regulars and American guerillas under General Washington. Look at the size and power of the new government that took the place of the colonial arrangement. In each case the remedy became more painful than the malady.

Philosophically, seeking to reduce government by force is incorrect. The ends in view and the means adopted to attain those ends are in conflict. Those who would be wise do not attack their enemy at his strongest salient. Those who want less government do not challenge the government on its firmest and strongest ground.

The Achilles heel of government is “sanction of the victim.” The reason is that sanction, by definition, cannot be forced. The government can compel you to submit to its edicts. It can take your money, your property, or your life. But it cannot TAKE your approval.

If the government is to receive your approval, that must be freely offered. And since the government cannot take it from you, you do not have to give it.

But the government cannot stand without that approval. Though you are to be victimized by the government, the men in government confidently expect you to applaud. But, you can stop applauding. Applause cannot be compelled.

In the recent national election which produced President Jimmy, the politicians were not really worried about whether Jimmy or Jerry would win. So long as you approved of SOMEBODY, government itself is approved and strengthened.

What became apparent was that the politicians had a very real and practical fear. There was an expressed public aversion to the political method *per se*. Inspired by libertarians from both left and

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THE HEEL OF ACHILLES

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right, many persons simply turned away from the polls and refused to participate.

Politician after politician immediately pointed out that growing "public apathy" was the number one problem in the nation. Actually it was the number one political problem because if what was called "public apathy" gained ground, political control was finished.

Unfortunately, a great many so-called libertarians weakened the effort to create massive public non-sanction and tried to gain power. For what the politicians called "apathy" was, in fact, *massive concerned and informed rejection of the political process per se*. And that is something the government cannot cope with by force.

What the government calls "apathy" is in many cases not the least bit apathetic. It is the philosophically astute and practical method of meeting force by non-force. It is dealing with the collective on an individual basis. It is peaceful; it is moral; indeed, it is even legal. There is no law that says you have to LIKE the government; only that you must obey. But if you withdraw your approval, government itself experiences a deep wound. If disapproval spreads and the disaffection becomes general, government will be reduced in large measure or disappear altogether. A peaceful, libertarian method is in harmony with peaceful, libertarian objectives.

To reduce the amount of sanction for any particular government does not call for organization; it calls for non-organization. When a given individual has studied the issues deeply enough; when he has determined that he will act as an individual and not as a member of a group, then he

has it within his power to withdraw his sanction. Not his tax money; not his property; but his approval.

When these facts are pointed out, opponents frequently charge that the problem with achieving non-sanction is that it takes too long. But the advantages far outweigh the time involved.

If by some lucky break government were to be reduced or eliminated, given the current intellectual climate, there would be a new government within a week. The people sanction government. They want it. And they will get what they want.

But, if you proceed to withdraw YOUR sanction, because you are well enough informed, then something is truly accomplished politically. You cannot be swayed by the next orator. You cannot be lured by the next promise of new goodies. Thus, we move toward less government, or conceivably toward none at all, by the process of moving just as fast as individuals are informed and prepared for a society of freedom.

The conditions of freedom are thrust upon no one. You gain a free society one by one. And as you proceed in this fashion, no backlash is possible.

Let those who want government have it. When they have learned better, let them act independently.

To move into a free society is an evolutionary process, not a revolutionary one.

Barbarians are not ready for freedom. Civilized people are. Our task is not to impose freedom, but to encourage the advance of civilization. Barbarism vanishes when there are enough civilized people who accept their own liberty and limit their actions to the areas of their own lives and properties, and hold their actions to the level of their own competence.



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FREEDOM — A DEFINITIVE PROPOSAL

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government guarantee a disappearance. The question begs a *non sequitur* for a response.

3. I must agree with challengers who point out that men have never agreed as yet on anything. Implicit in this argument against a condition of freedom is the supposition that progress is dependent upon human agreement. Fortunately, this is never true. Men have never all agreed, but their failure to do so has not prevented progress from occurring. But I do not agree with the arguers who contend that since it is inconceivable that all men will refrain from violating the freedom of others, a state of freedom is impossible. True, a state of absolute non-coercion for all people over all time to come is not anticipated. True also that at any instant that coercion appears, freedom will be lacking. I would anticipate that however well we strive toward freedom, there will always be more to do. Freedom is not something to be achieved and then put on the shelf in the sense that it is *fait accompli*. "The price of liberty," as has been observed, "is eternal effort."

The best illustration I can think of at this juncture to express the idea I wish to convey relates to the work of Lord Kelvin. He arrived mathematically at an understanding of absolute zero in terms of temperature and then sought to create the condition. He, and subsequent scholars, have failed to achieve the condition sought. They came close but absolute zero remains presently in the realm of thought and conjecture and has not been achieved by man. Nonetheless, by defining correctly, the entire industry relating to thermal dynamics emerged.

My concern is that we define and aim at freedom correctly. Then, that we work diligently and consistently in that direction, going as far as is humanly possible. I profoundly doubt human ability to arrive at perfection in this or any other endeavor. We are an imperfect species and whatever we do and however well we do it, other methods may improve our chances of reaching the ultimate target. Yet the target may be unreachable. That is, the target may be unreachable if we must include all of humanity and put man *qua* man on the *bull's-eye*.

But that is not necessary. The ability of one person to coerce another over a long time span, is extremely limited, if the tool of government is absent. Therefore, it is conceivable that we might establish a free society over the entire United States. On any given day, it might be that someone's liberty at some specific location might be impaired. But this will not impair the liberty of the others. If, in my neighborhood, at my place of business, and in my various social arrangements and relationships, no coercion appears, then I am enjoying a state of freedom even though a person

someplace else may be the victim of coercion.

It should also be pointed out that most acts of coercion are relatively short-lived. That is, they are brief if we do not have government around to intensify and prolong the problem. Thus, I might be the victim of coercion tomorrow morning. And, at that instant, freedom vanishes and coercion appears for me. But, in most cases, the balance is quickly restored. The coercive practice ceases and a normal state of freedom for me reappears.

I am convinced that unfortunate instances of coercion will always appear from time to time and possibly I will be occasionally coerced myself.

If we rely on government here, coercion becomes an on-going process and never halts. We descend into a state of semi-slavery and presently nearly everything that is not commanded is forbidden. Man loses his natural ability to think and act for himself (liberty) and gradually adopts the view that he cannot think or act without prior governmental permission. Freedom is confused with voting. We end defrauding ourselves. But none of these difficulties cause me to change the definition. Freedom is easily lost and most difficult to attain. But it is a glorious concept, a celestial objective, and we should never tire of laboring in the direction indicated by its nature.

4. I agree with those who tell me that if all men were good, government would not be necessary. I also agree that all men are not good. However, if we accept that man has the capacity for evil, it must follow that if men have that capacity, they cannot be trusted with government. If evil men are likely to violate the liberty of their fellows, how much larger a violation will occur when evil men have legalized power over their fellows? If men are evil or have the capacity for evil, government is too dangerous to be considered for a moment.

Granting the potential evil of men, I must earnestly strive for freedom since I believe with Lord Acton that "all power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Thus, I find myself working for freedom in either case. If men are good, government is unnecessary. If men are evil, government is so dangerous that it must not be employed.

5. And, what of the convoluted question based on the manifest differences among men, wherein some are likely to succeed and others likely to fail? Will not there be a tendency on the part of those who are destitute or who think of themselves as being in that condition, to impose on others and to thus deprive them of their liberty? Certainly the tendency will exist. And the problem of achieving and maintaining freedom is very real because of this.

But again, all that is being said is that a condition of freedom is hard to attain. So is any other
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FREEDOM — A DEFINITIVE PROPOSAL

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worthwhile objective. That which is easy of attainment, we already have. Freedom becomes in all probability the most exalted and difficult objective to which men may reasonably aspire. Is such an aspiration reasonable? To me it is both reasonable and practical. When we consider liberty, the natural ability of any human being to think and act on his own volition, we recognize the practicality of liberty. We are born free. Our task is to provide a social arrangement in which individual liberty is not lost, to wit: a state of freedom.

As we consider freedom, the social condition of total liberty, we recognize that only two general conditions are possible. We either have a totally free society (natural, practical, but enormously difficult to attain) or we have some persons being coerced by others (unnatural, impractical, but easy of attainment). There is no third position. It is not possible for all men to be coerced at the same time. Some must do the coercing if coercion is to exist. Therefore, we must find ourselves aiming in one direction or the other.

We either seek a free society or we seek an authoritarian society. An authoritarian society is one in which we approve of having some persons coerce others. A free society is one in which we do not approve of having any coercing anyone. Now,

it is unlikely that we will, in the conceivable future, manage a society in which zero coercion appears. And, it is impossible for all men to be coerced at once by the nature of coercion. We arrive at the bottom line. Which is better? Do we aim at what is natural, desirable, practical, though difficult? Or do we aim at what is unnatural, undesirable, impractical, but easy? We cannot attain to perfection in either direction. That is, we cannot arrive at any social arrangement in which exceptions do not cause variances from the condition sought.

It seems to me that it is only sensible to seek the desirable rather than the undesirable, however we may fall short of the total achievement. Like Lord Kelvin, should we not aim at zero? We may never reach it as a perfect condition. But we can always pick ourselves up and try to do better in the future.

Is this not superior to giving up? Should we condone and applaud an agency which, by its nature, must coerce and, hence, give our approval and support to authoritarianism? How much better, how much wiser to seek the fulfillment of man's nature . . . the liberty of the individual on a scale as grand as can practically be attained.

But we must begin with definition. Once we have agreed as to the nature of freedom, the path to its attainment opens before us.



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