

Is Government necessary?
Conversations with businessmen, executives,
writers, and teachers who don't think so.

ZERO

BY SAMUEL L. BLUMENFELD

GOVERNMENT: ANARCHY ON THE RIGHT

There is a new philosophy being cultivated across the land. It calls itself libertarianism, anarcho-capitalism, autarchy. Its followers make up a wide spectrum of well-educated, productive people. They include corporation presidents, executives, writers, students, and teachers. They share a vision of a completely free society, established on the principles of individual sovereignty and private ownership, without any government whatever.

No government? Why that's anarchy, you might say, and anarchy is a word that inspires images of chaos, rampant lawlessness, and mass fear.

But what is peculiar about the "new anarchy" is that it claims to be far more

orderly and stable than the organized chaos that is our present system of government. The new libertarians, as most of the new anarchists call themselves, contend that government, by its very nature, is the world's greatest creator of chaos and fear. They cite the wars of the past fifty years that have brought catastrophe to many enlightened nations: the extermination of millions of people by government acts; Vietnam; Watergate; police corruption; rapacious taxation; inflation; a justice system with medieval punishment and retribution; the Supreme Court decision on obscenity that has caused instant confusion and uncertainty; and oppressive laws that restrict our economic and social

PENTHOUSE - November 1973
volume 5, no. 3

Pub. by:
PENTHOUSE INTERNATIONAL, LTD
909-THIRD AVE.
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022 43

lives. They see taxation as theft and military conscription as slavery. Most people tolerate all this in the name of government and law and order. Their assumption is that without government conditions could get much worse.

But would they? Has history not shown that when governments are destroyed people not only manage to survive, but the basic fabric of society is maintained? Does society not depend more on individual self-control for stability and prosperity than on government control?

Perhaps "anarchy" is the wrong word to apply to a system wherein individual freedom and rights to property would be the fundamentals of a governmentless society. The old-style anarchists, born in the early days of the industrial era, championed individual freedom but thought property was that freedom's enemy. They saw government as enforcing the property system, and therefore they went to great extremes, including bombings and assassinations, to bring governments down. The old anarchists conceived the ideal society to be communal, a concept that contradicted the notion of individualism. They fell into this contradiction because they lacked a proper understanding of economics, of the connection between freedom and property—between a man's productivity and the ownership of his tools and products of his labor. They did not understand the marketplace or the principles of human action that govern the creation of wealth. They did not understand that a man could control his own life only to the degree that he could control his property.

But could not government be used in a limited way to protect individual freedom and property? Is not our present government a perversion of the ideal of limited government envisioned by our founding fathers? To answer these and other questions about a society with zero government, I talked to some new anarchists—including a professor of economics in New York, a best-selling writer in Vancouver, and a corporation president in Wichita.

I talked in New York with Murray Rothbard, professor of economics at the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. I had met him ten years before, when he was already known for his radical anarchistic views which then carried little weight among political conservatives who believed in limited, constitutional government. Ten years ago, a distrust of government, especially big government, was all that Rothbard and political conservatives had in common. They generally agreed that the less the government interfered with the economy, the better. Since then, Rothbard has written a number of books on economics and has become a spokesman for right-wing anarchism or, as he calls it, "anarcho-capitalism." He has acquired a large following, and his most recent book, *For a New*

Liberty (Macmillan, 1973), is being advertised as the "libertarian manifesto."

Rothbard told me that he had arrived at his ideology through the influences of his parents and teachers. Living in New York, his mother and father were involved in the Emma Goldman anarchist movement before World War I; but later, during the Depression, his father became a free-market conservative. While in preparatory school, young Rothbard was greatly influenced by a history teacher who was free-market oriented.

Pursuing the free-market argument to its conclusion, Rothbard could find no functions of government that could not be performed as well or better by private agencies:

"I found in my arguments with socialists and interventionists that once you justified the existence of the state, once you sanctioned the use of force to control people, for no matter what reason, you could justify taxation and every other evil and excess of the state."

For Rothbard, everything came down to one basic question: was government necessary at all? Tom Paine had called government a "necessary evil." But after two hundred years of American government and the full flowering of capitalism, one could finally ask if even that "necessary evil" was necessary. Rothbard has concluded that it is not.

What about ecology, roads, educating the poor, the national defense? Rothbard goes into considerable detail in his book on these questions and how they would be handled in a libertarian, governmentless society. If one thinks of these problems in libertarian terms, a number of noncoercive solutions are suggested. A libertarian society assumes a sufficient reservoir of goodwill and voluntarism to look after the helpless and indigent. Liberals believe that people have to be forced to help the unfortunate. Libertarians disagree, they are optimistic about basic human benevolence, and believe it would flower more in a voluntary society than a coercive one.

Ironically, some of the strongest opposition to Rothbard comes not from the liberal establishment, which sees libertarianism as a minor right-wing irritation, but from an element within the libertarian movement—the followers of novelist Ayn Rand. Champion of heroic individualism and laissez-faire capitalism, Ayn Rand considers herself an antistatist. However, she reserves for government three important functions: police protection, the courts, and national defense. She would fund these activities through voluntary contributions rather than taxation. Here Rothbard's followers challenge her. Why retain these lethal vestiges of government on even a voluntary basis? Police protection could be better provided by private protection companies. Arbitration, now a function of the courts, could be better provided by private, professional arbitration companies that would settle disputes

through voluntary, rather than forced, agreement. Military defense could be provided by private military agencies employing volunteer personnel.

According to Rothbard, the main bone of contention between the two groups is the handling of criminals. "The Randians insist on a code of objective law to handle and punish wrongdoers. We suggest that the emphasis should be switched from punishing wrongdoers to getting restitution for the victims. Private police would not be interested in investing time and energy in 'punishing' criminals for their crimes, but in retrieving stolen goods. Ostracism would be society's principal means of 'punishment.'"

Why maintain expensive prisons and the apparatus of punishment and incarceration? In Rothbard's system the threat of ostracism would be a great deterrent to crime; keep in mind that a human being can take and even enjoy all kinds of punishment (punishment, in psychoanalyst Eric Berne's terms, is stroking of a kind). But few men could bear ostracism—or no stroking—for long. It is probable that in a

Libertarian Sampler

For a New Liberty, by Murray Rothbard. Macmillan, 1973. \$7.95.

How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World, by Harry Browne. Macmillan, 1973. \$7.95.

The Nature of Man and His Government, by Robert LeFevre. Caxton Printers, Caldwell, Idaho. \$1.00.

No Treason: The Constitution of No Authority, by Lysander Spooner. Pine Tree Publications, Rampart College, 104 West Fourth Street, Santa Ana, Calif. 92701. \$1.50.

Libertarian Handbook 1973. 193 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass. 02116. \$2.00.

LP News. Libertarian Party, Box 31638, Aurora, Colo. 80011. \$2.00 subscription. *Books for Libertarians*. 422 First Street, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20003. \$1.00 subscription.

society of Rothbard's construction, a criminal would find someone to "stroke" him in the punishing manner he craves.

Would life in such a society be less safe than it is today?

"It's estimated," Rothbard answered, "that only about 5 percent of the criminal population is in prison. The rest are at large. There are a lot of people in prison, perpetrators of victimless crimes, who would be no menace to anyone if they were given their freedom. Even if all the hard-core murderers were set free, chances would still be ten to one in favor of being killed by accident rather than by murder."

The federal government statistics bear this out. In 1967, for example, there were 21,325 suicides, 113,169 deaths by accidents, and 13,425 homicides. Most of the intentional homicides were crimes of passion committed by relatives. The odds of being murdered by a criminal are smaller

than of being murdered by a relative.

If the government cannot eliminate deaths by suicide or accident, why should we expect it to eliminate deaths by murder? Governments have been the greatest murderers. Why should we expect a murderer to protect us from murder?

"Prisons are more for the punishment of lawbreakers than the protection of society," Rothbard went on. "There are a lot of taxpayers who are not interested in supporting institutions of punishment. That's another important difference between us and the Randians. Randians are punishment-oriented, and they spend a lot of time arguing over what punishments will fit what crimes."

I had once attended a series of lectures given by Nathaniel Branden, the intellectual heir of Ayn Rand before their bitter breakup in 1968. There was something peculiar about the Randians' lack of humor. These people were always deadly serious about their perfection and everybody else's imperfection. Of course, everyone was judged according to the Randian standard of perfection, which the Randians insisted was based on the coldest, most rational objectivism. The truth is that Ayn Rand's idea of perfection is based on her own subjective ideal, suited entirely to her own nature.

Despite these negative aspects of Randian philosophy, many of her followers have been led into the libertarian movement by her arguments against collectivism and statism, as well as by her support for laissez-faire economics. Randians were among a group of libertarians in Colorado who decided to organize the Libertarian party in the winter of 1971. During its first year, the party concentrated on the presidential candidacy of Dr. John Hospers. He is director of the School of Philosophy at the University of Southern California and one of the libertarian movement's leading spokesmen.

The party got its ticket on the ballot in only two states (Colorado and Washington), and drew about five thousand votes. Ironically, Ayn Rand urged her followers to vote for Nixon and said that voting for Hospers was a "moral crime" because it would help McGovern. Rothbard, on the other hand, has encouraged his followers to engage in political activity through the Libertarian party. He considers such activity educative.

The Libertarian party held its latest convention in Cleveland in June 1973. More than two hundred delegates were present. The party has grown to more than three thousand members; it is active in about thirty states and has embryonic groups in about fifteen more. The average membership age is twenty-six. The party's platform advocates, among other things, repeal of the income tax and of all laws against victimless crime—including smoking marijuana, publishing pornography, gambling, and buying gold bullion.

Since Rothbard is a professor of eco-

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nomics, I asked him for a short-term economic forecast.

"The big danger," he said, "is runaway inflation. The danger point comes when prices start going up faster than the money supply. We may be reaching that point."

"Can't the government stop inflation?" I asked.

"It could, but not without causing a recession, and both parties refuse to accept a recession as a solution. So they keep on inflating, hoping that the inflation won't get out of hand. This sort of thing can go on for a long time. But if the public decides that its money is not going to be worth very much next year, it may bring on runaway inflation by trying to buy up everything in sight instead of maintaining savings that constantly decrease in value."

The next libertarian I saw was Harry Browne, whose new book, *How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World* (Macmillan, 1973), suggests how an individual might live in a world of omnipresent government and still achieve a high degree of personal freedom and happiness. Browne argues that one does not have to wait for a free society before one can live freely.

Basically, Browne's book describes a process that everyone who has been at odds with his family and society has had to go through in order to maintain his own identity and integrity. It describes how one can overcome all of the pressures that prevent him from living the life he wants to lead, from being the kind of person he wants to be.

How did Browne fit into the libertarian movement? Though in his book he acknowledges an intellectual debt to both Ayn Rand and Murray Rothbard, Browne takes a uniquely personal and subjective approach to freedom. If freedom is what a man really wants, he can have it provided he is willing to pay the price society extracts for it. That price includes paying income tax, performing military service, and in general obeying myriad irritating and inconvenient rules. To be free, to live one's own desired life, requires that one get out of the "traps" that enslave him psychologically so as to be able to try the many personal available alternatives. A trap, according to Browne, is a philosophical truism commonly accepted and acted upon, though rarely challenged—"You must accept the will of the majority," "Loyalty to your country is supreme," "The good of society is more important than your own happiness" are examples.

"It's very easy to get caught in a trap,"

Browne writes. "The truisms are repeated so often they can be taken for granted. And that can lead to acting upon the suggestions implied in them—resulting in wasted time, fighting inappropriate battles, and attempting to do the impossible. Traps can lead you to accept restrictions upon your life that have nothing to do with you. You can unwittingly pay taxes you don't have to pay, abide by standards that are unsuited to you, put up with problems that aren't really yours."

Perhaps the one trap that will cause the greatest controversy is the morality trap. Browne contends that moral values are subjective, and that any attempt to live by an absolute or universal moral code created for other people will not bring freedom or happiness for those others. Since each human being is different, Browne

Do not confuse provoking society with living your life the way you want to live it—without society or government seeing a thing. Lower your taxes by using loopholes, instead of agitating publicly for tax reforms, which attracts the attention of the IRS. Lead a nonconformist sex life in private.

contends that it is impossible to achieve freedom or happiness unless each man and woman develops a personal morality around his or her own personality. He defines a personal morality as *an attempt to consider all the relevant consequences of your actions*. He writes: "A personal morality is simply the making of rules for yourself that will guide your conduct toward what you want and away from what you don't want. . . . A realistic morality has to consider many personal factors: your emotional nature, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and, most important, your goals."

All of the current liberation movements are basically movements against moral codes that attempt to dictate how people should live. Browne contends, however, that one need not wait for society to change before one can begin living according to his own moral code. Just don't

make a fuss over what you are doing. Do your own thing because you really want to do it, not because you want to shock society. Do not confuse provoking society with living your life the way you want to live it. The latter can be done without society or the government noticing a thing. For example, you can lower your taxes by using all existing loopholes instead of agitating publicly for tax reforms, which would attract the attention of IRS auditors. You can lead a nonconformist sex life in private, without joining women's lib or gay lib and thus provoking the anger of your community or the police.

I talked to Browne in his hilltop home in West Vancouver. The house, a modern three-level arrangement, has a sweeping view of Vancouver and the Pacific inlet that separates it from West Vancouver. He had recently bought the \$120,000 house with the money he made on his best-selling first book, *How You Can Profit from the Coming Devaluation*.

At forty, Browne is an inveterate romantic. He will sit for hours in his huge living room listening to Wagner, Puccini, or Delius on a magnificent stereo system, with a fire in the fireplace, a glass of wine, and a breathtaking view of Vancouver. There is a charming young woman sharing it with him.

"My philosophy," he said, "is one of individualism in the full sense of the word, in that I recognize and respect the individuality of every person. I recognize the basic subjective nature of perception and that no two people are alike. I take the other person seriously. I recognize his sovereignty over himself, just as I recognize my own sovereignty. I don't expect any other individual to conform to my moral code. It took me a long time to develop my own personal moral code based on my own unique individuality. A moral code has to be personal to be of any value as a guide to your own actions. It is, in a way, the most personal reflection of who you are."

Some of his critics consider Browne simplistic and unintellectual, but this doesn't bother him. He believes the purpose of his life is to ensure his own happiness. If his happiness can make someone else happy, all well and good. But he does not expect anyone to sacrifice their happiness for him. "Instead of depending on the rest of the world to make things better, you depend on yourself."

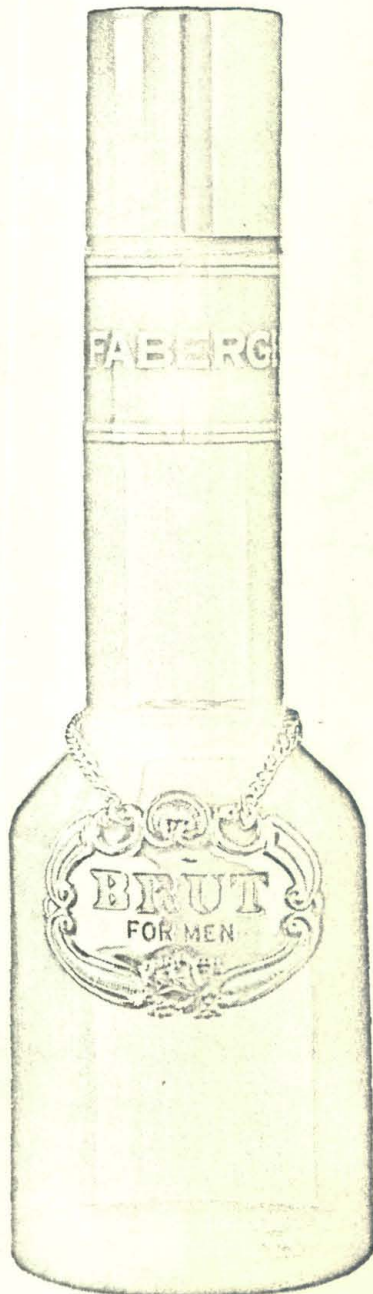
"Doesn't this make for a lonely existence?" I asked.

"Not at all," Browne replied. "You can find people who will accept you as you are. But you have to reveal yourself to them. If you hide behind a false front, the people you really want to attract won't be able to recognize you. But in order to reveal your true self you have to know yourself. You have to be honest in evaluating your qualities, abilities, weaknesses, and strengths."

"Some people find it hard to accept themselves as they are and create a

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false front. But the false front only attracts people who will expect something that is not there. They will be disappointed when they find out that behind the front is an entirely different person."

I asked him in what way he differed from Rothbard on the matter of anarchy.

"It's all in the way you interpret the word anarchy," he said. "I'm not an anarchist like Rothbard because I'm not trying to change the social system. In order to have the kind of society Rothbard wants, you have to have a society governed by certain principles and moral standards. Only a government can create that kind of general conformity. Actually, I'm more of an anarchist than most of them because I recognize the present anarchy all around me and am trying to live my life in that context. I have no interest in changing society. I don't have that many years left. I want to make the most of the time I have."

There is a kind of restlessness about Browne. He believes that the next twenty years will see far greater upheavals than in the recent past.

"I make plans involving a year or two. I don't believe in tying myself down to a long-range commitment in a world that's changing so drastically."

I left Vancouver and flew to Sacramento, where I had arranged to meet Robert LeFevre, one of the legendary people in the zero-government movement and the founder of Rampart College. He met me at the airport with his red Cadillac. He was in his sixties, with well-groomed white hair and an infectious smile. I brought him greetings from Harry Browne, whom he knew well. All of the important libertarians know one another, but each has developed his own variation of the philosophy of individual freedom. There is no orthodoxy or party line among them.

Like so many libertarians, LeFevre had started out as a Taft Republican, with a strong bias against government interference in a free economy and a belief that Republicans ran the government better than Democrats. But gradually he saw that the difference between the two parties was academic—they both advocated programs that were contrary to the principles of economic freedom. In 1954, LeFevre was hired by R.C. Hoiles, owner of the Freedom Newspapers chain, to write editorials advocating free enterprise for the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph and other Freedom newspapers. The only requirement laid down was that LeFevre be consistent in his arguments. It was this rule that led LeFevre to his zero government position. He simply could not justify the intervention by government into any area of life. Limited government was no more justifiable than unlimited government. Both were based on the immoral principles of coercion and control of people.

By 1956 LeFevre had formulated his philosophy of "autarchism"—the philosophy of self-control rather than govern-

ment control of self. In 1957 he created an institution known as the Freedom School to promulgate his philosophy of zero government. It was housed in several elaborate log cabins, and it attracted students from all over the country. Freedom School operated entirely on the free-enterprise principles it preached. In 1962 it became Rampart College, with an expanded faculty and more buildings; but it later became apparent that the institution had expanded too fast and bitten off more than it could chew. In 1969 the campus was sold and the school was relocated in the First Western Bank Building in Santa Ana, California, situated in the mainstream of the libertarian movement. By that time, however, LeFevre was no longer affiliated with Rampart College; he had resigned as director a few months before in order to conduct his courses on a free-lance basis. Over the years he had built up a corporate clientele that engaged him to give his free-enterprise course to executives. In this way, his philosophy reached many in the corporate community.

I asked him what the difference was between Rothbard and himself.

"We agree about 98 percent of the time. We differ on the use of the term anarchy. Rothbard calls himself an anarcho-capitalist and he calls me an anarcho-individualist. I call myself an 'autarchist.'"

This was a term LeFevre had coined after seeking a word to describe his concept: autarchy, meaning self-rule, as opposed to anarchy, meaning no rule at all. LeFevre sees self-rule in absolute terms. A human being is sovereign over himself and his property, and any attempt to deprive a person of that sovereignty is, in LeFevre's view, immoral. He carries this view of sovereignty over into his very controversial concept of justice, and writes, in his pamphlet *Justice*, "Justice would consist of an exercise of sovereign control over a person and his property, by that person himself." It would also include a willingness on the part of each person to impose self-discipline so that no one would seek to interfere with the control that another person naturally exercises over his own person and property.

How would society treat violations of such sovereignty? Here LeFevre proposes an approach at least as radical as Rothbard's, perhaps even more so:

"A radical and profound change in thinking is required. For ten thousand years or more, we have striven to retaliate against those who practice injustice or who we have been led to believe practice injustice. We have done it privately. We have done it through theology. And today, government is the god of retribution, and we employ it on a giant scale.

"The amount of time and energy expended in seeking to retaliate is incalculable. All wars contain this element. Most of our court actions contain it. Our prisons and other penal institutions are full of it. None of these procedures is economically

sound. None of them is moral. None of them has been successful. Retribution, vengeance, punishment, and retaliation are the greatest burden human beings have ever devised for themselves.

"Therefore, I am going to suggest that we stop *thinking* retribution and begin *thinking* protection."

"I recognize," he wrote, "that under pressures of emotion any man is susceptible to the call of the jungle. But let us avoid the intellectual dishonesty of presuming that we are moral when we are merely scared. What the victim of the first act of injustice should do, morally, is to respect the rights of the man who has not showed that respect to him. You do not treat the immoral man with immorality. You treat him to morality, and retain your own position of rightness. You limit the offense to the party who is guilty. You do not seek to take guilt on yourself."

There are a great many libertarians who have trouble accepting this concept. Yet it is perfectly consistent with the libertarian view of justice.

LeFevre also differs with Rothbard on the value of political activity. In that respect he is closer to Browne's view.

"The best way to fight government is to withdraw your support of it. You can do this by making as little use of government as possible. You can reduce your use of it to the barest necessities, such as riding on government roads, using the post office. The less people use government, the more likely it will be reduced. If more parents started private schools, public education would start getting smaller not bigger."

"What about political movements like the Libertarian party?" I asked.

"I like John Hospers," he smiled. "When he announced his candidacy I sent him a get-well card. He's not a libertarian, but a limited-government conservative."

What about Birchers and *National Review* conservatives? Were they coming into the libertarian movement?

"Birchers and Buckleyites are essentially counterparts of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society]. When a Bircher becomes a libertarian he stops being a Bircher. The libertarian movement has pulled people out of both the SDS and the JBS [John Birch Society]. If the process continues, you'll have a new split: the libertarians on one side and the authoritarians on the other. Conservatives who are uptight on nonconformist lifestyles will make common cause with liberals who are uptight on economic freedom."

I asked LeFevre what his feelings were concerning America's economic future. Harry Browne had told me that he believed a depression was inevitable. "A crash is the washing out of all the sins of inflation," Browne had said. LeFevre tended to concur.

"The government is engaged in sabotaging the economy of the United States through continued inflation and economic controls," he said.

"Would the country survive a depression?" I asked.

"People will survive," he said. "When a government collapses and goes down the tube, poverty takes over. But the recovery begins."

I went on to Los Angeles to talk to Seymour Leon, the current director of Rampart College. The college's offices have the air of a successful enterprise. Sy Leon, a man of about fifty, is of medium height and wears a short beard. He joined the staff in 1966 while Rampart College was still in Colorado. His introduction to libertarian philosophy had come through Ayn Rand's novel *Atlas Shrugged*, where he found an affirmation of his own values. He became an objectivist and a representative of the Nathaniel Branden Institute in Chicago and Milwaukee. In 1964 he and his wife, Riqui, took LeFevre's two-week course at Rampart College and became sold on LeFevre's zero government philosophy. They returned to Chicago and found themselves at odds with their objectivist friends, especially those engaged in political activism. The couple were eventually excommunicated from objectivist circles.

"We were excommunicated because we started to think," Leon said. "There is a certain mentality that seeks a godlike figure. Many followers of Ayn Rand are like that. But the breakup of Nathaniel Branden and Rand has been beneficial in that it has broken up the dogma."

I asked him how people accepted the idea of zero government today as compared to five years ago.

"There's been a definite change in people's attitudes. They will accept ideas that five years ago were taboo or considered too radical. Now we start with the question, is government necessary? and they are willing to listen. We hear of libertarian conferences being held all over the country. We now attract as many as eight hundred people at a weekend conference."

He explained that Rampart College no longer conducted classes as it had when located in Colorado. The institution now offers home-study courses, courses on cassettes as well as live seminars. Leon saw no fundamental change in the institution's point of view after LeFevre's departure. He did say that the college intended to expand further into psychology and child-rearing. For example, the newest home-study course was called "Raising Children for Fun and Profit."

"We have gotten into psychology," explained Leon, "because we found that people were experiencing a profound emotional reaction to LeFevre's course. People would burst into tears, become physically ill. Yet we were talking about ideas. I analyzed why this was happening. It was the critical analysis of basic values and the rearrangement of their values that caused these emotional reactions. It became apparent that people needed a

high level of self-awareness and self-esteem before they could really come to accept a voluntary basis for social organization rather than a coercive one."

Sy Leon, of course, saw no use in participating in the political process. He believed with LeFevre that the best way to get rid of government was to withdraw from it. In fact, he had formed a League of Non-Voters in February 1972 to urge people not to vote in the presidential election. He did it as a means of gaining attention for his position, and he was surprised how many radio and television talk shows invited him to air his views. He received about twenty-five thousand letters from all over the country supporting his position.

This indicates that there is indeed considerable potential support for the libertarian antipolitical philosophy in America. Many people are simply fed up with politics and their government's inability to solve the simplest problems, even with the most money any government has ever had at its disposal.

Leon ended the interview by telling me about a political candidate who had taken LeFevre's course some years before. After he completed the course, this man went back to his supporters, withdrew his candidacy even though his victory was assured, and thereafter concentrated on improving the quality of his own life.

To explore the spread of libertarian thought among the young, I went to see Lowell Ponte, a twenty-seven-year-old libertarian columnist and television commentator. He was living with his parents in Redlands, some sixty miles east of Los Angeles.

Ponte is a tall, rather heavy man. He is highly intelligent, tense, articulate, and a chain smoker. He has a great deal of technical expertise, especially in matters of atomic weaponry. "There are cratefuls of technical experts in the libertarian movement," he says. But for all his expertise in science and technology, he considers himself an "anarcho-mystic."

"Becoming an anarchist," he explained, "is a leap of faith. You enter a state comparable to a trip on LSD. It's hard to imagine a world without government when you've lived with so much of it all of your life."

His grasp of technology has given him insights into centralization's dangers.

"Government is using technology to strengthen its grip on everything. But technological centralization is also the government's Achilles' heel. Centralization through technology has made our society highly vulnerable. Most of the people of Los Angeles could be deprived of water by a few simple acts of sabotage. The system is extremely vulnerable. From a practical point of view, coercive government is a

danger to society. In a society run by coercion, the coin of the realm is power. Power-hungry people rise to the top in government. Coercion is their way of life. One person can become capable of forcing millions to do what he wants."

"But isn't an elective government a safeguard against such tyranny?" I asked.

"Bill Buckley says he'd rather be governed by the first five hundred names in the New York telephone directory than by an elected Congress, and I would agree. Politics attracts people obsessed by the applause of the crowd, and by their own fascination with power. In other words, elective politics attracts the sickest and most perverted people in our society, and these are the ones we must choose among."

I asked him how he proposed that the system be changed.

"The task for radicals is to see that government is not the enemy. Government is just a small elite who rob us through taxes for their own benefit, and the buildings in which that elite dwell. Our goal must be to end the 'governmentality,' the craving for a dependence upon government in people's heads. Government is the symptom, whereas governmentality is the disease. Government leaders have a vested interest in that governmentality, that addiction to social reflexes based on a leader-follower view of the world."

"But won't there always be followers looking for leaders, even if we don't have government?" I asked.

"Yes. And for that reason I suspect that a governmentless society would probably be a corporate society—that is, people who need the security of a big brother would attach themselves to the corporation that provides them with the kind of work they liked. Japan represents a splendid model of the corporate function. Companies dispense the same functions as government. Workers salute company flags, sing company anthems. A corporate society would provide government services without coercive power behind it."

Rothbard had also talked somewhat along these lines, acknowledging that conflicts could arise between corporations, but believing that such conflicts would be limited to the people specifically involved, rather than involve an entire nation.

Toward the end of the conversation I asked Ponte what he saw for the future of the libertarian movement. He was somewhat vague.

"The Left has no answer for anything. The answers will probably come from the Right. Youth is quiescent for the moment. The draft and the war are over. Perhaps the next big issue will be taxes."

My last stop was Wichita, Kansas, the geographic center of America. I had come here to see Robert Love, president of a company that makes corrugated boxes and author of *How to Start Your Own School*, published this year by Macmillan.



Lowell Ponte had referred to Love as one of the educationists in the libertarian movement. In 1960 Love, concerned with the education of his three children, had been instrumental in creating and building the Wichita Collegiate School, a private alternative to the public schools. The school, run strictly on full-cost tuition, free-market principles, has since grown into a healthy, thriving institution.

I had last seen Love about seven years ago. He had been one of the founders of the John Birch Society, and I had met him when I was a writer for some of the society's publications. In 1968, however, a year after I had left the society, Love and a small group of friends bought a full page in the local Wichita paper and advocated immediate withdrawal from Vietnam. For this action, the Birchers called Bob Love a communist, but the truth was that he had been converted to LeFevre's zero-government philosophy and couldn't see spending one more American life or one more dollar to create another oppressive government elsewhere in the world. Love, too, had started out as a Taft Republican and had evolved into a free-market capitalist. In the Fifties he worked hard to get the Kansas constitution amended so that no one in the state could either be denied the right to join a union or forced to join one. But the victory meant nothing—the amendment was never implemented. He'd learned the futility of political action.

Meanwhile, he had decided to create a private school; and this is where he saw that private action could produce tangible, durable results. Money could always be lost by inflation or confiscated by a totalitarian state, but an education endured. "All the material gain in the world," Love said, "is useless without the ability to think and to reason. A man can give his children values, ideals, and an education that can never be lost, stolen, or destroyed."

Love, a family man and businessman who has remained with his property in the middle of Kansas, sees things from a different perspective than do Browne and LeFevre. Browne, restless and single, prefers the mobility of gold and Swiss francs. Love sees his wealth in his home, his manufacturing facility, his school. This illustrates how two men can espouse the same basic libertarian principles but apply them differently to the conditions of their lives.


Love applies his principle of not relying on government for anything to his own business. He lobbies for nothing. He prefers to spend his energies adapting his business to the changing marketplace and the caprices of legislators rather than in trying to control either artificially.

Because he has seen so much energy wasted in political activity, Love is now concerned with how to expend the energy he has left. "I got so tired of defending the National Association of Manufacturers, the John Birch Society, and the Republi-

can party that I asked myself why couldn't I defend freedom without my motives being questioned."

So he dropped out of them all. Now he is infinitely more satisfied. He lectures to different groups in town, belongs to a local libertarian discussion club, has written a book about his school experience, and is helping to improve the school.

Both Bob Love and I had gone into the John Birch Society for the same reasons, defended Robert Welch for the same reasons, and finally left that movement for the same reasons. We discovered by painful experience that organizations can betray individuals far more deeply than individuals can betray organizations. In the end, we realized that any man or group who demanded loyalty only wanted it in order to betray you later.

I had talked with men who believe that a free, orderly, prosperous, and creative society is possible without coercive government. These men have faith in the ability of their fellow human beings to control their own lives and destinies. These men are creating a revolution that is not out to overthrow anybody. It is not only nonpolitical in nature, but basically anti-political. Its most effective tactic is to withdraw from all voluntary political involvement, to demonstrate through one's own way of life that it is possible to live without government. 



The advertisement features a large, stylized illustration of a Lark cigarette on the left, with the word "LARK" written in large, bold, serif letters across its filter. To the right, two packs of Lark cigarettes are shown, one slightly behind the other, with the brand name "LARK" visible on their labels. The background is a textured, light-colored surface. Below the cigarette and packs, the text "Put some more flavor in your life" is written in a large, elegant, cursive font. Underneath this, a smaller line of text reads: "Smoke from the finest tobaccos filtered through a bed of real charcoal to enrich the flavor and soften the taste." At the bottom right, a rectangular box contains the following warning: "Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health."

King: 17 mg. "tar," 1.2 mg. nicotine. Extra Long: 18 mg. "tar," 1.3 mg. nicotine av. per cigarette, FTC Report (Feb. '73).