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Libertarian

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thoughts on 6 and 5

by Paul Geddes

I applauded when Mr. MacEachen first announced that civil servants' salaries were going to be trimmed. Finally Liberals were admitting that their own irresponsible overspending was the chief cause of our economic troubles and that they were finally going to do something about it. It didn't matter to me that the government started their restraint program by reducing their employees' wages. Other financially troubled organizations were making similar decisions. And besides, I considered any cut in government spending to be a good cut.

What is beyond me is how the Liberals got sidetracked from curbing their OWN spending into forcing crown corporations further away from economic sanity. They even began dabbling with private sector prices.

I considered restraining bureaucrat's wages good because it reduces government spending NOT because it controls the price of labour. Controlling the price of labour would produce the same unintended consequences that any government controlled price causes -- shortages and queues or overuse and waste.

Instead of throwing crown corporations deeper into debt by trying to control their revenue, it's time the politicians started cutting the apron strings so the companies can learn to live on their own. Rational

businesses sell assets when they are in financial trouble. This would be good advice for Ottawa too.

The failure by our major commentators to distinguish between restrictions on government spending (which libertarians cheer) and government control of private prices (which libertarians abhor) is evidence either of muddled thinking or worse: it could be an attempt by the liberal flacks to reduce the popularity of government restraint or create public support for even more government control in the economy (i.e. wage and price controls). In the months to come it is important that libertarians make sure that the distinction between these two ideas is made clear.

REASON Magazine: If you are interested in getting recent issues (or even a subscription) for REASON, phone Paul Geddes 689-5260. REASON is currently available at the Vancouver Public Library. Help spread ideas. Buy a gift subscription for your local library.

Thursday evenings: First Freedom Toastmasters Club has begun another season. Time: 6:30 p.m. Location: uncertain. Phone Marco 937-0529.

Libertarian Supper Club: Saturday September 25. Speaker: Lindsay Semple. See page 3 for details.

what would you give up?

by Marco den Ouden

In late May, Vancouver Sun financial columnist Mike Grenby hailed Tax Freedom day, the day on which taxpayers finally finish working for the government and finally start working for themselves. Needless to say, some socialist wrote in and asked what people would be willing to give up for lower taxes. Mr. Grenby invited replies and the following is an edited version of the letter I wrote.

Dear Mr. Grenby,

You ask the question, originally posed by Mr. Resnick, "Which of the comforts of modern life would you sacrifice in exchange for lower or even no taxes?" The question, Mr. Grenby is a bogus one. It implies that only government can provide these many services they now provide. But that is not the case. Many (and certainly all the important services) would be provided by private entrepreneurs if not provided by government. And most would probably be provided at lower cost.

Before I get into a detailed discussion of specific government services, let me briefly explain the libertarian philosophical stand on this issue.

Libertarians hold that freedom is our most precious possession. We believe in the autonomous individual. In a nutshell, the libertarian principle is this: every individual ought to have the freedom to pursue his own interests, whatever those interests may be, so long as he respects the equal right of others to do so and so long as he renounces the use of force or fraud in pursuing his ends.

In its most eloquent statement, individuals have "the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Since man lives in a material world and must work (produce) to survive, property rights are a logical extension of these rights. No one could have the right to pursue his happiness or sustain his life without the right to own the fruits of his labour.

Libertarianism may be called voluntarism. We believe that

individuals may do anything they want when interacting with others so long as those actions are undertaken by mutual voluntary consent of all those directly involved.

We believe that these are moral principles and must not be broken by any individual or group of individuals. When an individual or group of individuals initiates the use of force (or fraud) against others, that individual or group of individuals have violated a moral principle. They have abandoned the principle of reason and peace and substituted the ideas of brute force and war.

We believe that the libertarian principle, already acknowledged by most people as a just and moral principle for day to day interactions between individuals, should be applied universally. That is, no group of individuals, even the government, ought to initiate the use of force or fraud against others. For example, most people acknowledge the correctness of the moral injunction against theft (the forcible taking of another's property), but our government initiates the use of force against its citizens by taxation (legalized theft). There seems to be a double standard in our society. Actions regarded as wrong when undertaken by individuals are often upheld as correct when undertaken by government.

Libertarians don't believe in double standards. The moral principle that no one must initiate the use of force against others must apply to groups of individuals (including the government) as well as to individuals.

The only moral and proper use of force is in self-defence or in retaliation against those who have

(continued on page 3)

Supper Club

On June 12, Tom Pappajohn of the Western Canada Concept Party spoke to the Libertarian Supper Club about his party and its prospects.

Although he presented the WCC as very free market oriented, he was grilled by the audience over several non-libertarian aspects of policy. WCC's restrictive immigration policy was challenged as was WCC's opposition to unilateral removal of tariff and other trade barriers.

Despite the conflicts of opinion, the mood was amicable and an enjoyable time was had by all. Mr. Pappajohn expressed an interest in attending future Supper Club meetings as a member of the audience.

Our next Supper Club meeting will be held Saturday, September 25 at the Sandman Inn, 1110 Howe Street, Vancouver in the Capilano Room. Cocktails at 7:00 PM, dinner at 7:30PM.

Our speaker will be Vancouver financial analyst Lindsay Semple. Mr. Semple is a former Contributing Editor to World Market Perspective and wrote the foreword to Ed Murphy's best-selling book, A Legacy of Spending. He will be speaking on the state of the economy.

The dinner will be roast beef and the cost of admission is \$13.

the Free Man's Library

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The Ominous Parallels by Leonard Peikoff Hardcover \$23.50

Prior and Posterior Analytics by Aristotle Hardcover \$17.00

Metaphysics by Aristotle Hardcover \$15.00

WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE UP (from page 2)

initiated force or fraud. The only moral function of government is to act as an agency of collective self-defence and retaliation against criminals.

If you look about you at the troubles of the world, you will discover that all the evils that exist stem from one basic idea, the idea that some individuals or group of individuals may legitimately initiate the use of force against others. Libertarians want a world of voluntary interaction and peace.

Socialists often charge that capitalism is the law of the jungle, dog eat dog. But, in fact, it is the opposite. The law of the jungle is the law of force and violence. Socialism institutionalizes the law of the jungle and advocates that the state use force and violence against some citizens for the benefit of other citizens. Capitalism is based on voluntary interaction and trade. If I disapprove of General Motors, they cannot use force to compel me to buy a Corvair from them or to work for them. But if I disapprove of Petrocan or the CBC or the Post Office, I cannot simply boycott them as I can General Motors. The government will send its hired guns after me and forcibly take my hard earned money from me to pay for these agencies. Which case would you call the law of the jungle, Mr. Grenby?

To get back to your original question, what would I give up for lower taxes? As I said, the question is a bogus one as I acknowledge that many of the services are useful to me. But I would like these services turned over to private enterprise. I would like to have the liberty to voluntarily choose the auto insurance, health insurance, and even recreational facilities that I want to patronize. I do not want some monopoly of government rammed down my throat.

Even such services as streets, highways, parks and fire protection can be provided through the free market (not to mention garbage collection which is already semi-privatized in a number of the lower mainland's more enlightened communities.) Certainly private entrepreneurs would not have saddled us with a monstrous bill for B.C. Place or that white elephant, Mirabel Airport or sundry other monuments to some politician's vanity.

(continued on page 4)

WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE UP (from page 3)

There are many functions that the government does that we could do without entirely. I would shed no tears over the demise of numerous regulatory agencies such as the CRTC, marketing boards, etc. And we certainly could do without the foreign aid apparatus, subsidies to business and to individuals, customs and import duties and restrictions, employment and immigration control, the Department of Indian Affairs and so forth.

Even for services that many libertarians regard as proper government, such as the police, the courts and national defense, the method of financing these services must not involve coercion. Taxation must be voluntary. The minutiae of financing a totally voluntary society may involve lotteries, fees for service, requiring restitution and compensation from those convicted of crime, insurance and other methods. These have been addressed in various articles and books and continue to be addressed periodically by libertarian philosophers.

We pride ourselves on being a liberal society. People ought to remember that the word "liberal" comes from the latin "liberalis" meaning "of freedom, befitting the free". The libertarian principle is the most liberal one there is, "Anything that's voluntary!"

Let those who would put shackles on free men, who would force fellow citizens to pay for things they didn't want or circumscribe their peaceful activities (even if these activities be repugnant), justify their illiberality, be they so-called liberal or conservative or socialist. Let those who would initiate force against others justify their advocacy of the law of the jungle and explain how it squares with their claims to be advocates of peace.

The only peaceful world is a voluntary one, where the use of force is abolished. Only such a libertarian society deserves to be called civilized.

FRASER FORUM

Last month, the Fraser Institute sponsored two public forums on the compatibility of capitalism and religion. Local libertarians were able to enjoy speeches from such noted libertarians as David Friedman, Arthur Shenfield, Father James Sadowsky and Vancouver's own Walter Block.

Among the issues debated were whether religious believers could in good conscience favour capitalism, whether they could support state redistribution of income or even whether it is moral to bribe bureaucrats or lie to them.

The basic question asked, however, was whether capitalism was moral and if it could fit with religious beliefs.

Those who missed the forums will be able to read about the issues discussed in a book to be published by the Fraser Institute in the coming year.

**the greater vancouver
libertarian association**

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