

The Nature of Man and His Government

by Robert LeFevre

Here is Robert LeFevre's classic argument (1959) for a purely free society, the essay that made him a leading, if controversial, spokesman for the libertarian position on government and society in the 2nd half of the twentieth century. He argues that government is in its essence a violation of rights, one that makes life brutal, poor, and short. He demonstrates that no government anywhere has lived up to its basic promises, and calls on all people to contribute to building a new kind of freedom.

Introduction by Rose Wilder Lane

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This little book is important because it is revolutionary thinking.

To appreciate its value correctly, we should remember the World Revolution's career so far.

Not two centuries ago, refugees and castoffs on a wild coast between an empty ocean and an unknown wilderness, farther from the world's affairs than Samoa is now, made an epochal discovery of man's real nature. "We hold these truths to be self-evident," they said, "that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty —"

A declaration that liberty, as real as life, is the *nature* of "all men," challenged the basic belief and the practical arrangements of the whole world. And to defend it these low-class underlings rose, "a rabble in arms," and defied the world's Great Powers.

They came from frontier cabins along the James, the Delaware, the Connecticut, the Mohawk, walking in moccasins and fringed deerskin up the trails of Virginia, the Carolinas, York State, the Hampshire Grants, to meet the solid fire of the British Regulars with musket shots and their revolutionary war cry, "Liberty and Property!" And a poor refugee printer spoke for them all: "These are the times that try men's souls... There hath not been such an opportunity since the time of Adam. We have it in our power to make a new world."

They fought and lost, fought and lost, fought again — and lost, for eight years, to a contemptuously broken treaty and a pause. The Great Powers stood around them, ignoring them, preparing to fight each other for the new continent: Spain south and southwest of them, France in the west, Great Britain northwest, north, and using their

eastern ports. These enemies' secret agents were among them, bribing, conspiring, plotting. The commander of their little army was in the pay of the king of Spain. The Republic of Vermont was a wavering ally. Many New Englanders were ready to return their States to Great Britain. In that precarious time their President, John Quincy Adams, discussing their policy, remarked in passing:

"When the day shall come for your representatives to determine whether the territories of Ceylon and Madagascar, of Corsica and Cuba, shall be governed by rules and regulations emanating from your Congress ... and whether their people shall ultimately be constituted into States represented upon the floor of your national legislative assemblies...."

For their discovery of the natural liberty of "all men" was world-revolutionary. The world of God-Kings, of Ruling Classes and wretched peasants, serfs, slaves enduring brutality, hunger, misery, could not survive that discovery.

They fought for it again — losing on land, their Capitol looted and burned, but winning on the Great Lakes, boldly winning in Britain's own coastal waters — to the Treaty of Ghent, a real peace; and at last, after forty years, real recognition of the existence of their Republic — their revolutionary "republican" federation of thirteen little, poor, but "free and sovereign States."

Again and again, through the long past, leagues of nations had failed. This was a league of "all men," based on the nature of man; so in time, as its makers thought it must, it could be a federation of all mankind, a new world of free men. Including Eskimos.

The refugee printer wrote: "An army of principles will march on the horizon of the world, and it will conquer."

Now a strange thing occurred. In the source and center of this real World Revolution, the men who were making it — forgot it.

Three generations of free men, while overcoming the fierce resistance of a wild continent, actually created here a wholly new way of human life, never before imaginable. Men engaged in this stupendous task put their whole minds into it. And the minds of American intellectuals remained in the Old World, with the thinkers who were reacting against the Revolution.

In 1789, George Washington was President, and Jefferson and Lafayette were taking the Revolution to France. In 1792, the Jacobin socialists ousted the French republicans. The Jacobins decreed "unity," dictated and wrecked the economy, tried to enforce unity and obedience by massacres and the Terror, collapsed, and made way for Napoleon, the first Hitler. Then appeared in American textbooks the European view: "The French Revolution began the spread of liberal ideas."

In the 1830's and 1840's, active Americans were annexing the Republic of California. Americans in northern Mexico, at San Antonio and San Jacinto, were fighting and dying for freedom and their dream of the Lone-Star Republic of Texas. At Yale, an honored guest, the French socialist Fourier, was enthraling his learned audiences with his visions of a Socialist World, and New England's intellectuals were fondly trusting that their Brook Farm commune was a beginning of the future Communist World Commonwealth. It wasn't.

The Revolution was arousing reaction against it, everywhere in the Old World, from Mexico in 1820 through all South America, to Italy in the 1860's, Germany in the 1880's, China in 1911, Russia in 1917. The whole Old World was wrecked. That ancient world of rulers and ruled, tyranny and slavery, poverty, misery, famine, torture, human degradation, was smashed by its violent reaction against the discovery that "all men" are endowed by their Creator with liberty, as real, as inalienable from a living person as life itself.

Since 1860 the Jacobin reaction has been organized. The first Communist International failed in France in 1870, and its disheartened members disbanded it in Philadelphia in 1876. The Second Communist International collapsed in 1914; its former members became Fascists in Italy, National Socialists in Germany. The Third Communist International is now an armed Power, and the issue at last is clear; in the ruins of the Old World, the Reaction faces the New World with bared teeth and claws, snarling, "We will bury you."

A century of heedless builders and reactionary thinkers has had reactionary effects even within this Republic. Too many Old World fallacies have been believed here, too many Old World measures imitated. Apparently only one lone newspaperman, Mr. Haskell, of the *Kansas City Star*, recognized the "New" Deal as a stale imitation of ancient Rome in its decline. But the source and center of the World Revolution is still in this revolutionary Republic, this only successful league of States, the first ever made to defend every person's human rights: life, liberty, property.

A real World Revolution is not to be won in two centuries. The reaction against it has wrecked the whole Old World. It wrecked France and retreated to Germany; wrecked Germany and retreated to darkest Russia and stagnant China. It can retreat no farther; now is the showdown. Now the struggle between the old, barbarous past and the new, possible future involves the whole human world and every one of us alive.

The basic question, on which the answers to all other questions depend, is: What is the nature of man? The only political question is: What is the nature of the institution named "Government"? It is a simple fact that all men's future for centuries is being determined by the answers that Americans give to these fundamental questions. We have it in our power to make a new world. There has not been such a responsibility since the time of Adam.

So I would ask you to sharpen your own thinking on Mr. LeFevre's genuine thought about these questions. The value of this little book is its contribution and its stimulus to true revolutionary thinking. I think you have not read it like before. If it jolts you, that's good; these are the times when minds need waking up. Let nothing keep you from it any longer.

I. Man and His Government

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan; The proper study of mankind is Man.

Man is a conglomerate of many things. His distinctive characteristic, above all others, is his ability to create tools. In this department he is unique. No other animated entity of all creation, so far as we can tell, has this ability, at least to the extent that man has it.

Man has learned, because of his remarkable toolmaking facility, to extend himself into all kinds of worlds and situations which would be beyond him except for his tools. It is the use of tools which gives man mastery over this planet. If man plunges beyond this planet, it will be his tools which take him there.

One of the principal characteristics of the toolmaker is his ability not only to devise the original tool but to improve upon that tool which he has devised. It could be argued that a failure to improve a given tool, while other tools were being improved, might seriously handicap man's progress. In other words, if man found himself addicted to the use of, let us say, the hand axe as the only tool for cutting wood, to such a degree that he would not consider a better method, the development of power saws would have been meaningless and impossible. If man wants to use an axe, and if his desires in this connection are buttressed by superstitious fear, by religious conviction, by stubborn willfulness or mental inertia, so that he believes the use of the axe is right whereas any tool other than the axe would be wrong, then man would never be able to go beyond the use of the axe. To convince him that the use of the axe in the midst of far more effective tools in other categories is no longer desirable, would require a virtual revolution of thought. Mankind would have to examine its habits, its thought patterns, its moral convictions, the very mores of the race itself before it would consider anything else.

Therefore, man's use of a particular tool beyond the date of its obsolescence, though it admittedly had served a purpose at one time, might actually become a harmful usage. An insistence upon the use of an archaic instrument could hold back man's progress, perhaps indefinitely. Further, if the tool were basic, a dedication to its employment could become actually destructive. For it might be that this one tool was of such a nature that it could and would interfere with the development or the improvement of virtually all other tools. Man could be bound and limited by the very device which once was, perhaps, one of his chief aids.

If we can begin to understand the tools men make, we may begin to understand more about man's true nature. The nature of the creator is discernible in his works.

One of the most curious and one of the most useful toolmaking facilities which man has is his ability to organize. Any organization made by man can be classed as a tool.

Man begins his organizational efforts by classifying things in groupings according to his understanding of those things. He learns to make associations on the basis of identity and similarity. He then learns to make disassociations on the basis of differences and, finally, opposites. Man organizes his thoughts, his time, his physical possessions. Finally, he organizes his neighbors and politics is born.

Men have made hundreds of thousands of organizations. Each one has a purpose. Men have learned to combine their energies around a specific objective; harness the energies of diverse and sometimes even conflicting personalities; and concentrate upon a program, project, or product, to the exclusion of all other things. If you look at this process objectively, you cannot help but be amazed.

During the long and bloody history of human progress, the most prolific and fertile efforts have been put forth by men to create an organization which is called "government." Government has been deemed by primitive and semicivilized men as the single most important tool ever to be devised.

Government is important because it is a tool designed to multiply the strength and power of individuals. If one man is strong, two men would be stronger. From earliest times man has desired strength. If government, the invention of man, could be so formed that it multiplied man's strength, then man would have an important device of power to use against his enemies. This is the reason for government. It was the answer to the search made by primitive men for collective strength in place of individual lack of strength.

For us to understand the nature of man, a good beginning could be made by attempting to understand the nature of this tremendous tool of man's devising.

What is government?

Clearly, all governments are simply groups of men or women which are put together for the purpose of finding strength, of providing protection. Every possible combination of rules, codes, laws, charters, constitutions, regencies, protectorates, treaties, contracts, specifications, and customs has gone into the tens of thousands of governments which have been devised during history's meteoric course. But however the framework is made, however the structure is built, the fact remains that government is a tool of man's devising, neither better nor worse than the men who devise and use it, and calculated to make man stronger and better able to protect himself in his weaknesses, by the use of force, exerted by some over others. That is all.

The understanding of what government is, and what government is not, is of paramount importance. The importance of understanding government lies not in the importance of government itself, but in the importance men place upon their *beliefs* respecting government. The importance of understanding government lies in the importance of the security and protection which governments have been devised to provide. Thus, while men may believe that a government is important in itself, beneath this belief is the fact that government is a means to an end, not an end in itself. So we must not only examine this means, this tool of protection, but we must also explore protection, and the necessity for it if it exists.

2. A Reasonable Viewpoint

Men have many viewpoints respecting the functions and the purposes of government. Let us explore some of them in turn.

It has been noted that men are weak and that government is a device aimed at helping men to overcome their weakness.

Physically, mentally, and even morally, men appear to be weak. As we look at man's physical nature, we recognize immediately that he is no match for many other living things. Lacking tools, modern man would survive with difficulty if at all. Tools multiply his energies, making him more than a match for other living things. In a hand-to-claw combat man could be bested by almost any other living creature relatively near his own size.

Man cannot outrun the four-footed animals, but his tools can. Man cannot outfight the wild beasts, but his tools can. Man cannot tame the domesticable animals, but his tools of fences, ropes, cages, special foods, and knowledge can.

Looking at man's mental stature, again we are prone to discover his weakness. Men have lived in error. What progress man has made has been made haltingly, as he rubbed superstition and fear from his eyes, studied the true nature of matter and learned to rise, by means of the tools of books, research, test tube and model, into a better world.

Compared to what man does not know, even all modern mental achievement is but a single candle flame flickering in darkness. Yet by means of his tools, man is overcoming this darkness. Where would man be without, let us say, the alphabet; the numerals 1 to 10; the printing press; paper, ink, and glue? Eliminate the tools and within a few generations man would be engulfed once more by superstition, fear, and ignorance.

And what of morality? Here is, perhaps, the greatest frontier yet to be crossed by humankind. What does man know and understand about morals? Very little. In centuries, he has learned that the Golden Rule is good, and has less than a dozen basic rules of conduct embodied in the Decalogue.

Here, the church and religion itself have been man's most useful tools. But today, even as man's technology improves, as his mechanical genius unfolds and his knowledge of matter increases by leaps and bounds, his ability to govern himself and to master the precepts of morality approaches a yawning chasm. It could be said that the area of man's basic goodness has been too little shored up by effective tools. While man's material tools improve, man's moral tools are neglected and remain largely static. It would not be too harsh to say that man's morality has gone into a decline.

Here, then, is man — a moral, mental, and physical entity having life. And here, also, are man's weaknesses, embodied in his very nature.

But as we have shown, man has, from his earliest beginnings, turned to government to bolster his weaknesses. Government is man's chief organizational tool to be employed against his weaknesses.

Thus, when men turn to government in an effort to overcome weakness and to obtain protection, the strength desired is found in compulsive unity. Government, inherently, places individualism at a low point on any scale of values. Individuals are the enemies of government. Government is inescapably concerned with unity. Individuals are the necessary victims.

It is true that some governments have proclaimed a contrary doctrine. Some have said that the individual is important and the government is merely the servant of the individual. But let the evidence be presented and we discover that this assertion is only a pleasant fiction. The servant has the power and the strength. The individual bows before the might of the servant, who is, despite the platitudes, a master, not a slave to men. Governments rule. Individuals are ruled.

Any individual must give way to the violent cohesion of government.

If the individual is physically, mentally, or morally in error, that is to say, if the individual is physically a criminal, mentally unbalanced, or morally degenerated, the combined and powerful action of a government *may* provide an amelioration. And it is in this area where actions taken by government are deemed to be not only proper in a moral sense, but highly practical and desirable. Since it is true that an individual who refuses to practice self-discipline and practices theft, for example, can be opposed, apprehended, and even punished by government, the employment of this tool by human beings has long been upheld as a prime necessity.

This would seem to be, then, a reasonable function for the government to have. What we must explore are some of the other functions which government has assumed. Also, we must look into this same function — that of apprehending and punishing criminals — to determine the actual necessity of the function and also to discover whether the function could be performed more practically, more morally, more economically and more certainly by some tool other than government.

Man's progress has come largely of his ability not only to discover tools, but to improve tools. Can the thief-taking ability of government be improved upon by providing a better tool?

3. Aggressive Power

As we look at government we find that men have organized for the purpose of protecting themselves and their property. Government is the tool of this protection.

Also, since government is always an agency which plans to use and, indeed, must use force, we have noted that government derives its power from a compulsory unification. All persons under the jurisdiction of a particular government are compelled to agree with whatever that government does. The agreement can be enthusiastic, tacit, or reluctant. But the agreement must be there. Government's power to protect is based upon that agreement, however secured. Power, to be effective, cannot permit exceptions.

Thus, the government is inevitably opposed to individuals. The individual is the natural prey of the organizational tool. And we have shown that when the individual is immoral, mentally retarded, or physically aggressive against others, the government can employ its cohesive power in a manner which is pleasing to people in general.

In short, it can act defensively, taking a position against the one on behalf of the many.

So long as the matter is simple, the case clear-cut, the individual obviously out of order, and the protection of the people generally the paramount issue, government is fulfilling what people generally expect of it.

But matters are rarely simple and cases have a way of being complicated and fogged over with a combination of motives, behavior patterns, backgrounds, and prejudice. Thus, more times than not, an individual will object to some particular government action only to find himself, by reason of his objection, the object and the victim of governmentalism.

A peaceful and law-abiding citizen, for example, may have perfectly sound and moral reasons why he does not wish to share his money with the government or the politicians of Yugoslavia. His conviction can be logically derived, morally certain, and sincerely maintained. In holding to his conviction, the individual is harming no one. His belief is not inimical to the welfare of other people. Actions which might spring from his belief are not aggressive. In other words, physically, mentally, and morally, such a citizen can be above reproach.

Yet, when the government adopts a policy which prescribes the sharing of his earnings with a foreign government, the man who objects to this can be treated in precisely the same manner as a bank robber could be treated and for the same reason. The government cannot brook a deviationist.

If the government decrees against bank robbing, it can permit of no exception. It will use its full force of unified power to prevent bank robbing, or, at worst, to apprehend and punish the robber should one appear. And if the government decrees a universal sharing of its citizens' wealth with the politicians of another country, it can permit of no exception here. It can and it will use its full force of unified power to collect whatever sums it deems advisable and will punish any person refusing to provide those sums, with arrest, fine, or imprisonment, and in the event of resistance, with death.

Thus, in practice, the tool of protection, which men have devised out of their weaknesses, can be employed and is employed with equal vigor and ferocity against both the criminal and the good and harmless citizen. Here the bank robber and the patriot who loves his country are equated.

Government has but a single standard: obedience. Its decrees, good, bad, or indifferent, are enforceable. And the men in government cannot recognize a law which need not be enforced. If the government has adopted a policy, the policy must be carried out, even though one policy may be aimed at social stability and the other at social injustice.

This is one of the characteristics of weakness contained in man's nearly universal tool of strength. The device of protection can be employed as a weapon both defensively and aggressively.

4. The Law Factory

Having granted that a government can perform a defensive function by apprehending and punishing the criminal, we must look at government on a broader scale.

It is immediately apparent that there is no government in all the world, saving only extremely small and local constabularies, which reserves for itself solely this simple and at least partially constructive function. The prevention of crime and the punishment of the criminal have become, in most instances, subsidiary departments of government. In the main, governments have gone far beyond this field of activity.

Today governments concern themselves in general not with criminals, but with law-abiding citizens. Every citizen is a victim of the aggressive tactics of government. Government begins by seizing the arbitrary and total power of deciding how much money it wants. Then it collects the money without a care or concern for the plight of the individual who must pay or be punished like a criminal.

Next, the government establishes hundreds and thousands of regulations which prescribe particular practices and proscribe others. Almost every action of every citizen has its legal "do" and "don't."

The list of prohibitions and compulsions is too lengthy for cataloguing here. But it pertains to business operations, licenses, building regulations, zoning, hours of employment, prices, trade, quotas, embargoes, subsidies, grants-in-aid, traffic, assembly, slander, libel, trespass, health, cleanliness, quality, quantity, method, education, indoctrination, propaganda, news, pictures, morals, food, drink, clothing, housing, sanitation, roads, farm products, transportation, search, seizure, mental outlook, exchange of parcels by post, and so on.

It can truthfully be said that there is almost no activity in which human beings engage which is free of legality. Think what you will, do what you will, there is a law somewhere which either compels, limits, or prohibits.

Try to think of something that people do. With the possible exception of breathing, laws bristle from the activity like quills from a porcupine. And the result of all these laws is to make any individual who does not conform in every respect, a lawbreaker.

Thus, the average person today, buttressed in by government, surrounded and overshadowed by government, finds himself a lawbreaker several times during an average day. And this fact turns him from being a law-abiding citizen into a lawbreaking citizen and equates him with any criminal who, in fact, breaks a law with aggressive intent.

But the government, as has been shown, cannot concern itself with anything but the universal obedience it must enforce. Thus, any violation of law becomes in essence a punishable offense. And whereas the government does maintain certain classifications — civil, criminal, and the like — the fact remains that even in civil matters government can and will punish and apprehend with vigor. This is not the fault of government. This is the nature of government.

This is the major point which must be understood eventually. Government which passes and enforces endless rules and codes is not out of character when it does so. It is in character. That is the way any government operates. And the longer a given government endures, the more numerous will be the laws it enacts. It is the business of government to pass laws and to enforce them. These laws are the productive sum of all governmental effort. Therefore it is not to be wondered at when thousands and thousands of new laws come into existence every year. It would rather be a marvel if this did not happen.

Government is a law factory. It passes laws in the same manner that another type of factory extrudes metal molding. Government is a lawmaking tool.

But, whereas a factory which extrudes metal molding is providing a product which is useful to the citizens generally, and which certain citizens will purchase voluntarily; the government factory extrudes compulsion which is useful principally to the government, itself, but is purchased *in advance* by the people, who are never in a position to refuse to buy.

5. Government As Competitor

We have now shown that government has a single, possibly legitimate, function, that of apprehending and punishing the criminal. We have also shown that government has, in its manifold legal actions, gone far beyond its possible legitimacy by passing thousands upon thousands of laws and rules which tend to equate the average individual, who is peaceful and orderly, with the criminal who commits acts of aggression with willful intent.

Now, we must continue to look at government as it goes even beyond this limit. For within our own lifetimes, our own governments — national, state, and local — have gone beyond even the excessiveness of multiple legal prohibitions and compulsions.

One of the most serious incursions performed by the governments against their citizenry has occurred in those instances where the government has abandoned its position as arbiter and compulsionist, and has embarked in the role of entrepreneur. Today, not content with compelling and preventing citizens as they go about their daily routines, government has developed for itself an independent status as a business or industrial entity.

Our federal government has taken on this chore in more than nine hundred separate fields, ranging from corset making, rope manufacture, and candy-bar purveying to the distilling of low-grade rum. It has become a provider of electric power, gas, and water; it runs golf courses, zoos, and tourist attractions; it manages bus and railroad lines, radio and television stations, newspapers and periodicals. It manufactures nuts and bolts and copper wire, and engineers immense building projects. It builds roads and ships, runs hospitals and, even in the end, handles graveyards.

Yet all of these things also are done by private persons, managing their own affairs under government supervision and by permission — after taxes; whereas the government cannot supervise itself, pays no taxes, and consistently competes with the very persons who are compelled to provide the wherewithal for government enterprise. Nor have state or local governments been free of the general federal trespass. In point of fact, in many areas local governments are the principal offenders.

This is a very far cry, indeed, from the simple expedient of catching and punishing thieves and murderers. Nor is this the end of government's straying from its prescribed course.

In our own case, a new departure in governmentalism has arisen to plague every American. For in this country chiefly, although the offense also exists in other countries to a minor degree, our own taxpayers are compelled to pay taxes for the support of foreign governments. And this is tyranny of the worst order.

Yet it is not unknown in history. Weaker states have, from time immemorial, been compelled to pay tribute to stronger and more vigorous neighbors. The innovation, circa the 1930's, was that the United States of America, the then strongest and most vigorous nation in the world, began to pay tribute from a position of strength. And this was the great advance towards barbarism, made exclusively by American politicians.

Stripped of its humanitarian language and reduced to fundamentals, the payment of American tax money to foreign powers constituted international bribery of an order a degree worse than the payment of ransom money to the Barbary pirates. Fear was obviously at the bottom of the move.

With America the greatest and most productive nation on earth, her politicians became fearful of both the envy of others and the warmaking potentials of others. It was as though we lived in a glass house in a neighborhood of stone throwers. And to prevent the stones from being thrown, our government adopted a policy of rewarding our neighbors for the negative passivity of not throwing stones.

The claim was made that this would win us friends. The most simple and least informed psychologist could have revealed that this practice would only win us the contempt and hostility of others. For America was no glass house. It was a rich and productive reservoir of a high percentage of all the production on earth, including the production of the means to defend ourselves. And this our neighbors knew.

6. National Defense

We come at once to government's classic usage, that of making war upon government's enemies. Whether we begin our examination of government as a warmaker in tribe, clan, city, state, or nation, or even as a body of nations joined together, we find this the single most costly and terrible function that government can ever attempt. Aggressive warfare is always the exclusive prerogative of government. Mobs, groups, families, or individuals may fight. They may riot, destroy, pillage, and perform in any wanton way. But it takes a government to conduct a war. Only government has the capacity, extended through both time and space, to organize sufficient force and violence to sustain a war. And only government, in our age, can effectively amass sufficient wealth for such a nonproductive and destructive purpose.

Aggressive warfare can never be justified on any moral ground. The use of initiated violence is abhorrent to all persons. But what does fall under our gaze is the apparent occasional necessity for a government to perform in war as a defendant. It is true, governments being what they are, that certain governments will plot and plan an aggressive campaign of combat, however immoral or foolish such a campaign might be. And it must follow that if any government undertakes so violent a course, other governments, lying in the pathway of the deliberate predator, may with some justification inform their citizens of the danger.

What should be the nature of this information? Since government is merely a tool, and since it is always the citizens who face the hazards occasioned by a physical clash in battle, the alert should always be couched in terms acceptable to volunteers. Further, the call to arms should come from the people and not from their government.

If there is a real danger, the danger is one which the citizens will recognize. Having recognized it, they will do what they can to defend themselves. They are the actors of the drama.

On the other hand, it is entirely possible, and in many instances a proven fact, that the announced danger is fancied rather than real. Governments tend to make trouble, in a great hubbub of concern for their own prerogatives. The citizens are capable of discerning the difference between a scare drummed up by power-hungry politicians and a real threat to their safety and security. In truth, the citizens are always in a better position to make this discernment than is their government. Governments, as instruments of force and power, are far too prone to operate in an atmosphere of fear. They tend to engender fear. They end by believing their own engenderings.

One of the most serious mistakes the citizens can ever make is to grant to their government the power of a draft. Governments which can forcefully enlist the citizens under them, can shoulder their way truculently among all foreign powers, confident that they can compel a final showdown to their liking. Lacking this power, a government is constantly in review before its citizens. The citizens may, in such a case, refuse to accept their government's foreign policies and the errors perpetrated thereby. This would leave such a government in an untenable position. It must move warily and peacefully or risk an ultimate exposure before a hostile force.

From a practical point of view the volunteer in any war is a better soldier than the conscript. The nature of man being what it is, men will always seek to be in the place they wish to be, and they will attempt to get away from the place they do not wish to be. If a man chooses to oppose an actual enemy in the field, it is because he would rather be in such a position than in any other. But if a man is compelled to take the field, and is uncertain as to the actual hostility in the breast of his supposed enemy, he must be driven and forced at every turn of the road. Such a man will only stay to fight because he fears his own government more than he fears the guns of his opponents. Under such compulsions he does not do his best. Nor is his love of country encouraged by such outrage.

Our problem is not to find a way to compel men to defend themselves. This they will always do gladly and voluntarily if defense is truly needed.

Our problem is to prevent the evils of conscription which hamper true defense, create armed forces which contain aggressive potential, and create a drain of economic wealth beyond all other actions. We must be vigilant that we are not lured into hostile poses by a fearful or belligerent government.

But here we run into a whole series of dilemmas. The dilemmas are occasioned by the fact that historically the citizens have turned over to their government all power of decision respecting the preparing for and the waging of war.

How can a government, armed and capable of conducting an effective defensive campaign, be successfully prevented from the slightest act of aggressive war? To this question, history gives us a discouraging answer. Any government fully armed and ready for defense is all too prone to prove the point upon the field.

Alas, the human record proves another point. Who is the aggressor in any war? With absolute unanimity the answer is, the other fellow. The bristling engines of war build up along each national boundary. The pressures mount behind the barricades. A rising tide, like a great wave, towers menacingly until sometime, somewhere, the laws of gravity take hold and the great wave topples, spilling out across the barriers like an onrushing flood. This is aggression. Who caused the spilling? The science of tactics and of strategy gives us the official ruling. "Each act of war is retaliatory." Even the first act of any conflict is in reprisal for some prior condition.

The prior condition in itself need not be hostile. Differences between nations and people abound. Wars have been waged for the flimsiest of reasons. Yet, when a government decides that warfare is "the only course," the slightest pretext, relating to color of skin, religious differences, tariffs, immigration laws, language differences, differences in philosophies, or even hostile words, has established at one time or another a cause for war.

Thus, even when one government hurls its legions across a boundary in an obvious attempt to amass land and plunder, the excuse is always given that the aggression occurred because the government on the other side of the boundary drove the government on the near side to this final deadly act of politics.

How can the ultimate in human foolishness be prevented? Clearly, it is preposterous to assume that the tool capable of such a holocaust can also be relied upon to prevent the very thing it is uniquely designed to do. This would be like supposing that fire will not burn, or that a fire once started can be extinguished by a larger fuel supply. One does not call upon one's government to prevent war. One calls upon one's government to wage it. And it is here that the necessity for understanding man's own nature as well as the nature of his tool *de main*, becomes, in modern times, acute.

If we are to believe the tacticians, war is always a reaction against some prior act. But this is only saying what has been said all along, that war is the natural extension of politics. War is organized force employed by government against some other government which is under no constraint to give obedience to alien politicians. Governments wage wars against their individual citizens and it is called policing. But when a government wages war against another government, it is called by its right name.

But let us ask, in what way is a war against an opposing government different from government's eternal war against the individual? The answer is that in principle it is the same; only the battlefields and the size and scope of the arena provide a distinction. But it is a distinction without a difference in principle. Governments back up their decrees by force of arms. In the event the decree is leveled against a citizen, the force of arms required is moderate. In the event the decree is aimed at a foreign power, an army must be employed to compel obedience.

In the end we will see that only governments make war. The people in all nations do the fighting and the dying. But our quarrel is never truly with them. Our quarrel is always with their government, which sets them upon us.

We are not suggesting a dismantling of the tool of our possible protection.

But we are suggesting that we examine this tool, recognizing that while it is capable of defensive action, it is also capable of so conducting itself at home or abroad that defensive action, in the end, becomes the only course open to us.

Here, as in every other case, that which was formed for our protection becomes, finally, the very reason we need to be protected. This tool of defensive potential inevitably contains the seeds of aggressive force and violence. The larger and more powerful it becomes defensively, the more it is apt to use its vast ability in some aggressive manner.

7. A Government's Government

If we would understand why our government has so invaded private rights; if we would learn why our government has expanded so greatly during the past two and a half decades; if we would comprehend the thinking which has caused our government to resort to bribery in an effort to maintain friendly relations, and is even now considering the advisability of launching a war to prevent a war from breaking out — we must look to the nature of man, and not to the nature of government.

Government, as we have attempted to show, is merely a tool. Man, the maker of government, is, in the final analysis, the master of government. Yet man has made government to perform the opposite function and to master man. And while all governments begin with the premise that they will protect the many peaceful from the few who are belligerent, it is in the nature of governments that the rules will be extended and expanded until the state itself becomes man's mortal foe.

We cannot blame a lever if, in our exercise of it across a fulcrum, it slips from our grasp and smashes a toe. We cannot blame a shovel if, in the hands of the wielder, it plunges into an ancient tomb and permanently damages a priceless relic.

The tool is blameless. And thus, the government, within itself, is blameless. It is simply a ravaging monster, naturally, and will continue to grow, to expand, to pounce upon its victims and devour them in the normal course of its activity. That is the kind of tool it is. Man made the tool to perform in that fashion.

It is an instrument of force and coercion. And there can never be an instrument of force and coercion which will consciously restrain itself. It must be restrained. Yet there is no tool capable of such restraint. For any type of tool, whatever its nature, which is allegedly formed to restrain and contain government, would, by its own nature, simply become a government's government.

In other words, the restraining tool for a compulsive instrument would have to contain a greater accumulation of power than the compulsive instrument or it would be ineffective. But this, in essence, would also be a government. It would simply be a larger, more compulsive, more dangerous and more mischievous tool and less subject to restraint than the original instrument of coercion.

The United Nations falls into this category, as does every other prior political organization aimed at universal peace. The United Nations is simply a government's government. The members of the United Nations are, by definition, not the peoples of the world, but the nations of the world, at present eighty-two in number.

Individual people cannot belong to the United Nations. Only governments can belong. The delegates to the United Nations are simply politicians who have been appointed by the member governments. And it is in the nature of the United Nations that it will look after the governmental interests of its members. Hence, the things that the member governments desire to do will become the policies of the United Nations.

But the thing all member governments desire to do is to rule their own people and to collect money from them. This is inherent in their natures. So the United Nations, perforce, will aid and abet the member governments in their universal desire to maintain a coercive hold over their individual subjects.

Thus, the United Nations is a government of the governments, by the governments, and for the governments. And it cannot and will not restrain these governments, for the members support the giant, looking to it for backing, even as the individual citizen supports his own government and looks to it for backing.

So much for the nature of government, and even for the nature of a government's government.

But at the root of all government stand the people. What is it in the nature of human beings which causes them to look to a government?

There is only one thing which causes man to look for and to organize a tool which is an instrument of compulsion and prohibition. That thing is fear.

Men look to government to protect them because they fear. And virtually without exception, everything that human beings fear becomes a project for government.

8. The Product of Fear

Fear is one of the most interesting and one of the most basic of all human emotions. And, as we have attempted to show, man, recognizing his weaknesses, which are many, is fearful of many things. He fears his predatory neighbor, death, old age, poverty, loneliness, hunger, and cold.

In man's rise from the primitive to the relatively civilized status of modern times, man has been propelled by fear probably more than by any other facet of his heterogeneous nature.

His fear of hunger has caused him to search diligently for dependable food supplies. His fear of cold has caused him to erect buildings and to fashion clothing. His fear of death has caused him to study the nature of matter, to discover the germ theory, to guard his health and to provide as long as possible against the ultimate.

His fear of the supernatural, which led him first into a belief in a plurality of deities and created a world of superstition, led him ultimately toward morality and the Golden Rule.

He discovered that it was wise to fear the immoral act of others, and hence it was a matter of simple prudence for him to forbear when it came to committing an immoral act himself.

Probably no basic emotion of man has been so fruitful in its results. If men were not chronic worriers, they would take no thought of tomorrow. As it is, they have taken great thought of tomorrow and the result is that our todays are buttressed about with forethought, even though tomorrow always brings its problems which must still be solved.

It is this all-compelling emotion, fear, that has sired governments. Man is fearful of strength in others. Therefore, he has devised an organizational gadget, containing compulsory unification, and by means of which he hopes to offset, or even to overcome, the strength of others.

Governments, then, are not agencies of right, necessarily. They are, necessarily, agencies of strength. It could be said that man, feeling certain that he was surrounded by gangsters, has devised a gangster of his own, theoretically obedient to his own will, who will act with truculence against alien gangsters, while remaining docile and tractable towards his deviser.

History teaches us with much repetition that this is an enormous fallacy. Governments begin with a soft side towards their own creators and a hard exterior exposed towards potential foes. But as time passes, the hard exterior extends until it completely encompasses the government. Then, it develops that it has no "soft" side at all. It becomes equally hard and impervious towards every human being, since the nature of the gadget is that it must be strong against human beings.

Government's presumed selectivity, in knowing whom to favor and whom to oppose, is actually nonexistent. This is because, as we have shown, the nature of government's strength is derived wholly from its compulsory unification. Government can permit no exceptions to its rules, whether these rules are aimed at preventing an aggressive act against a citizen under its jurisdiction by another citizen similarly situated, or whether the rules are aimed at compelling uniform attendance at a government institution of indoctrination by every junior citizen from the age of six.

In the one case the government may act defensively, to protect the rights of an individual; in the other case, the government will act aggressively, protecting no individual right but simply compelling universal obedience to its decrees.

In the one case the government acts as a friend, within the framework of its theoretical usefulness. In the other case the government is the predator, actively enacting the role of the foreign or alien gangster.

And it is apparent that men have so much fear concerning the imminence of gangsterism in their midst that they tend to bear the iniquities of government's predatory actions without a murmur, rather than to deprive themselves temporarily of their own gangster, however powerful and unruly he has become.

9. The Guillotine

Government's ability to bite the hand that feeds it has long been mourned by its principal progenitors. Simple human beings for at least six thousand years have learned to put their faith in some governmental organization only to find, after the passage of a few years, that the agency they trusted has turned to rend them in their tracks.

They have long marveled at this phenomenon. And their wonder, during the unfolding of man's story, has taken two principal avenues towards a solution.

They have concluded that the particular men selected to head up and run a particular government have been evil. Hence, they have reasoned, if they can find *better* men, they will have nothing to fear.

They have concluded that the particular *form* of government they have devised has lacked certain safeguards. They have reasoned that if the government could have been organized along different lines, they would have escaped the evil their government was busily engaged in inflicting upon them.

We will take these two avenues in turn.

First, what of the men in government? Nowhere in all the world has such feverish activity attended the process of selecting *good* men to governmental office than in these United States. With us, it is a passion, nay, a mania.

In the United States an enfranchised citizenry is virtually the single untouchable institution of our time. If the people are free to vote and, thus, to select the men who will become the personnel manning our own gangster device, it is deemed that we have overcome barbarism and that security is certain. The right to vote is, in the public mind, prior to and superior to the right to liberty. It is by the process of polling that we secure for ourselves the best in the way of governmental servants. But is this really true, or is it rather a large superstition generally believed?

Could we timidly inquire if the voting process has always secured for us men of superior ability? And if our answer is affirmative, or we have raised our voices against a shibboleth ... then how does it happen that so many administrations of *good* men have been able to do so many evil and harmful things to their subjects?

Let us assume that voting practices embody no superstition; that, in fact, the men selected by the voting public are inescapably the *best* that can be found at a given moment in our history. Then, the resulting harm must come, not because of the good men but because the good men are powerless to prevent the harm.

And surely we are mature enough in our deliberations at this crucial point in our history so that we can admit that our multitudinous governments, at every level — federal, state, and local — do considerable in the way of harm. The harm is obvious. We have less freedom than we used to have. We are more coerced. We are plundered repeatedly and in growing amounts for every conceivable scheme that the human mind can invent.

Nor does one act of plunder solve the problem for which the plunder was originally legalized. Rather, each act of plunder gives birth to the necessity for additional acts of plunder. And the number of laws curtailing us, regimenting us, restricting us, and punishing us grows hourly larger and more difficult of evasion.

So the harm continues, yet the men inflicting the harm are the best that can be obtained!

If this is the case, Isabel Paterson, in her monumental work, *The God of the Machine*, gives us one kind of answer. She establishes that government is a tool, and she defines the nature of the tool as that of a guillotine. In effect she asks, what good does it do to have a saint of every conceivable virtue operating a guillotine? Personally, the man may be above reproach. He may have the highest of morals and ethics. He may be imbued with a passion for doing good. But the mechanism he is hired to operate cuts off heads.

He may dislike to cut off heads. He may weep with true sorrow whenever a head falls into the basket. But he was hired to pull the rope that lets the knife drop. And when it comes down, off comes the head. That is the way the tool works.

In her analysis, Miss Paterson is eminently correct. Government is an agency of force which can and must be employed against every deviationist. And this is only to say again that the government must oppose the individual. Therefore the "good" man in government is like a priest with a machine gun. The mechanism does the harm. The man who operates it merely pulls the trigger.

10. Two-Party System

There is no other way of explaining the phenomenon. Good men do find their way into government. But having gotten there, they must either perform their function or resign. If they perform their function, they use the government, an agency of compulsively gathered coercive force, to accomplish that function. Inevitably, they hurt someone. This is undoubtedly the reason such a furore is maintained over the necessity for a two-party system. Nothing is said in the Constitution or the Bill of Rights about the necessity of a two-party system. Yet most Americans hold that two parties are necessary.

The reason is obvious. The party in power inevitably employs its friends and well-wishers, and passes laws and enforces proceedings against others not of the same political conviction.

Over a period of time these laws and enforcements build up a body of resistance. The oppression mounts. It may become a public scandal. Finally, the "ins" are ousted and the other party assumes power.

Immediately the process repeats but with alternate emphasis. Those who are "ins" become "outs." And the newly hired "ins" go to work to cut their friends free from oppression and to visit their vengeance upon those who subscribed to the beliefs of the former "ins." Then the same iniquities come to pass all over again. Those persecuted change places with the persecutors. And around and around goes the political wheel of chance, with the voting public spinning the wheel.

In our own time we have seen one curious variance occurring to this otherwise monotonous and easily predictable routine. The "ins" and the "outs" have performed a merger. The party in power has now scarcely a discernible difference from the party out of power. And the reason for this merger is self-evident. The government has in itself grown so large and so formidable that it tends to absorb any and all politically interested persons, regardless of party affiliation. And since, in the main, there is no real difference in political parties, each party desiring only to rule — each party adopts an advertising program consisting of those public statements which each party leader feels will win an election — the merger is that of blood brothers and constitutes no betrayal.

Of course there are those who have felt that elections were for the purpose of establishing policies, rather than for the purpose of selecting men. These persons, always a minority, vote for the statement made by certain politicians and against the statement made by others. But since all of these statements are nothing but window trimming, constituting a verbal display, and in all probability not representing either the thinking or the intention of the person making the statement, a vote secured by virtue of a statement does not establish policy but merely enhances the position of the man who made it.

But again, this is simply the mechanics, the "advertising." The purpose of an election is to select men, not policies. And in the end, the men are selected, after which the policies are adopted.

But the policies, whether from party one or party two, are more nearly identical than opposite. For it is the business of government to employ force and to compel obedience. And it is the business of any politician within a government, regardless of his party, to employ government as an agency of force and coercion; to compel obedience and uniformity; and to punish any individual who does not go along with those mandates imagined as necessary by the men in power.

So, now we must ask the inevitable question. We have considered the situation that must ensue if we presume that the voting process always provides us with the best possible government employees. But, what if this is not true? What if the voting process does not guarantee the selection of superior men?

In this case, then, our preoccupation with the polls is simply a false reliance upon a majority. And since a majority is nothing but the amassing of power by virtue of superior numbers, are we not extolling the alleged virtue of might, instead of right?

Either the voting process will provide for us the best men in government, or it will not. Whichever way we choose to believe, we meet the inescapable result. The result is that government has the tendency of growing large and unmanageable and in the end of turning to rend and devour even its most devoted followers.

II. Superstitious Awe

We have now explored the first avenue. This is one of the paths taken by some men when they discover that their government has become predatory against themselves. They seek to alleviate the predation by changing the personnel within their agency of collective power.

The other avenue to be taken deals with the changing of the form of the government in an effort to prevent the predation in advance. From time immemorial, men have also concerned themselves with this process.

Let us explore this avenue.

We have shown that fear is the basic emotional drive which leads men towards the establishment of government. Primitive governments have maintained their power largely by fostering fear.

Look where you will in the governments of our forebears and you will find men, clad with power, using terror and compulsion in order to maintain a hold over their followers. Thus, fear not only drives men to form governments but it is used within the government formed for the purpose of perpetuating that government.

Probably the most ancient form of government ever to come into existence amassed power and dealt with fear by claiming that the person in the government had been selected and appointed by divinity. For centuries it was this belief that provided confidence in government and kept it there — so long as people believed that their gods had a hand in its formation.

Men do not mind being ruled by gods.

They recognize their own weaknesses but, assured that divinity is actually conducting governmental affairs for them, they subside and become docile when they confront the politician clad in such glorious disguise. The record is full of stories of men who have gladly gone to their deaths under the impression that their deaths served a divine purpose. And this, for centuries, was the *ne plus ultra* of every politician.

Cunning rulers went in league with priests — the one, the embodiment of force, the other the embodiment of propaganda and superstition. It was a telling combination.

In point of fact, so well did this combination work that there are traces of it still apparent in our modern world. The Russian government, as an example, today combines the function of despot and priest, by organizing army, civil offices, schools, and even churches with the same kind of dual leadership. The general is flanked by the political commissar. Military decisions are buttressed with the party line. The government, in Russia, takes the place of God. To obey the Leader is to gain total approval. No contrary voice is permitted. Thought and action are blended into a

consistent whole. Every action is made to follow the statist philosophy. And the statist philosophy is turned and twisted to match whatever actions are taken. History is rewritten after the fact, so that whatever occurs can be shown to be that which was predicted and planned.

There are evidences within our own government that the same process has much appeal in this country. This is especially true in the military, where the debacle of multiple defections during the Korean war has caused the ruling hierarchy to adopt a program of indoctrination which is calculated to make everything that the military attempts, correct, and everything that is correct, an action of the military.

There is also a general superstition among the voting groups that our political leadership cannot err. Whatever the leader decides is sanctified with general approval. The most banal and trivial decisions are exaggerated into being utterances of profundity. Even questionable policies are glossed over with the statement: "Our leadership is the best in the world. That leadership could not have come into being unless God had so willed it. Therefore, it is up to us, the citizens, to give immediate, unquestioned, and undeviating loyalty and obedience to every action of our political leadership."

This is the "God wills it" of the ancients, scarcely altered with the passage of time and the enlightenment of the people. The superstitions which plagued mankind for generations still ride upon its shoulders in the guise of a majority decision only God could sanction.

It is frightening and a discouraging spectacle.

12. Varying Forms of Government

Governments always come into being because men recognize their weaknesses as individuals. The very first government to be formed undoubtedly was that of a strong man, stronger than his fellows, who was called upon by his weaker followers to protect them against real and fancied dangers.

It was doubtless a dictatorship.

Then, because the dictator in time grew old and feeble, and because he dreamed of bequeathing his power and authority to his own offspring, the monarchial system was born. The dictator, while at the height of his power, had convinced his followers that his ascendancy over them was divinely ordained. He could have told them that he was a son of a god. Thousands of early politicians maintained this fiction. And not a few of them were deified, either during their reign or after their passing.

The next step was for the successful dictator to claim that his family, the descendants of his loins, were also divinely ordained. Royal families came into being.

Thus, God and government were intermixed in the general opinion, and theocracy, the oldest and perhaps the most frightening of all governments, held sway for more than a thousand years.

We have already described this system. It provides for the combination of despotic power in the hands of a king with the power of superstition wielded by a crafty priest. Disobedience to secular authority became at once a blasphemy as well as civil disobedience. One does not defy God, even when God is unapproachable and his only avenue is the king who rules you.

But wherever these despotic pretensions were maintained, the people suffered. And, in the end, we shall see that it is the people, and not the politician, who are supreme. For, even when people believed largely that a god or many gods had established their ruling politician in office, they revolted against his tyranny and oppression. This is the history of man.

Everywhere we see men setting up governments, submitting to them, growing tired of the mounting oppression, and finally throwing off that yoke, only to acquire another. And each successive yoke represented an effort to do away with the evils of the prior form by establishing a better form.

We can think of no better statement covering this phenomenon than that written by Rose Wilder Lane in her great book, *Discovery of Freedom*. Here is what she says:

They replace the priest by a king, the king by an oligarchy, the oligarchy by a despot, the despot by an aristocracy, the aristocrats by a majority, the majority by a tyrant, the tyrant by oligarchs, the oligarchs by aristocrats, the aristocrats by a king, the king by a parliament, the parliament by a dictator, the dictator by a king, the king by.... there's six thousand years of it, in every language.

Every imaginable kind of living Authority has been tried, and is still being tried somewhere on earth now.

All these kinds have been tried, too, in every possible combination; the priest and the king, the king who is God, the king and a senate, the king and the senate and a majority, the senate and a tyrant, the tyrant and the aristocrats, a king and a parliament.... Try to think of a combination; somewhere it has been tried.

Each of these efforts has been made with the most solemn and noble purpose. Always the aim has been to set up an organized collective which can and will use force against the enemies of a particular group, class, clan, nation, or family. Always the collective has amassed power and ended by using that power to harass and tax and oppress and regiment the very persons who set it up and gave it original obedience. There is no variation to this story. Nor is it possible to find a combination which has not been tried.

Let us now consider the American experiment, which was, without a doubt, the most noble and the most solemn ever undertaken.

13. The American Experiment

When the American pioneers found themselves the victors after a war with England, they decided they must undertake the establishment of a form of government which was to be impervious to inner tyranny.

It is probable that at no other time or place in history had so many men, so well informed, so nobly motivated, ever convened for such a purpose. Few of the founders of our Constitution were politically ambitious. With high purpose and deep sincerity, they set about the task of providing a form of government which would stand the assaults of the mean and selfish.

They labored diligently and well. And when they finished, although they were far from unanimity, they had forged a document which was at once both wonderful and a political curiosity.

For the great distinction which set the American form apart from all others was that it was probably the most inefficient, cumbersome, and unwieldy government ever devised!

How well the founders knew that men with power could not be trusted. They set up a conflicting and enigmatic mechanism which was more notable for what it could not do than for what it could do.

There was an executive branch; but its functions were limited and contained. There was a legislative branch, equally frustrating. And, finally, a judicial branch, which was to watch the fulminations of the other two.

But this was not all. Having established three equal containers for power, they proclaimed that it was a federated government, with sovereignty residing both in the separate states and in the people generally. In short, what they had devised was not a government but the antithesis of government as it was normally contrived.

European politicians chortled with glee when they first heard the news. Here was an anti-rule rulership; a powerless powerhouse; a contradiction within an enigma. They opined that it would never work. However, a few elevated mentalities glimpsed the ideal our pioneers had striven to attain and gasped at its daring and immensity.

And in large measure the European politicians who ridiculed the form were right. The American government did not perform with efficiency. It wasn't intended to. And the American people, finding themselves for the first time without a ruling despot, were hard pressed to know what to do. Consequently, unable to call upon their government for aid or guidance, they set to work themselves. Their energy, uncontrolled by living authority, changed the world. Their achievements, in a few short years altered all of history.

For the first time, freedom was proclaimed as a national policy, individualism was given full sway, and government was reduced to puppeteering functions.

It was delightful, while it lasted. Never was so much accomplished by so few, under such adverse conditions. Freedom was the big payoff. Men who do not have to kneel come to recognize divinity within themselves as individuals. Our ancestors were a stiff-necked lot. They bowed to none but God. Government could go hang for all of them.

We had done away with theocracy by delivering it a mortal blow. And even in our Bill of Rights it was ordained that the government could make no law affecting the practice of religion. Church and state were separated.

We had a republic which used a democratic process, which provided for a temporary aristocracy, which removed the priests, which put God into heaven and off the throne, which uncrowned the dictator or the king, which eliminated succession to power, and which generally disrupted every ordinary political practice.

For years it worked, because it didn't do too much. Our power was in the hands of the people.

But our founding fathers had seen that what they had done, even though it was a mechanism shorn of much power, still contained the seeds of tyranny. Therefore they provided that as time passed, changes could occur. And at least some of them fondly hoped that, by permitting change, still further reductions in governmental protocol would come.

An informed populace could learn the fallacy of even this much power remaining. For if the people individually learned to overcome their weakness, what need had they for an instrument of force?

The changes, provided for, came in due course.

But the changes were not in the direction our most dedicated idealists had desired.

14. Sic Transit Gloria Mundi

We honor the authors of our Constitution and Bill of Rights. We admire them and pay them homage. More than any other group of men at a particular moment of history, did they comprehend the inherent dangers which inevitably come to the fore when men are clad with the robes of power and the insolence that office-holding breeds.

The founders of our government sought to nullify these dangers. They provided what we have called our system of checks and balances, which deprive an officeholder of supreme and perpetual power.

Yet our founders were humble. They knew they were fallible and, therefore, they wrote up the amendment clause and inserted it in the Constitution. They fondly hoped others coming after them would surpass them in high purpose and in penetrating wisdom. How vain those hopes have been is now demonstrated.

For, since the days of our government's origin, we have never equaled the character and purpose of those who set pen to paper to forge that basic charter. If there was one oversight of which our founders were guilty, this is it. They had too much faith in man's ability to understand his own motives and principles. They failed to comprehend the extent of the venality and lassitude of politicians and ordinary citizens.

Yet, even here were warnings. Franklin said: "We have given you a Republic, if you can keep it." And Jefferson, even in his first years in office, cried out against the mounting tendency of public and private citizens alike to look to the government to solve all problems.

In the end, the Constitution was overcome. Instead of remaining a system of checks and balances, our government has become overbalanced and predatory. The executive branch of the government is very largely ruling the land by means of bureaus and executive decrees. Congress still passes laws. But the decrees put out by the executive department, including treaties, outnumber congressional laws by more than four to one.

And the Supreme Court, instead of testing the validity of laws against the Constitution, has itself, in large measure, become a lawmaking body, enlarging its own functions and approving virtually every other action which enlarges government.

The policies expressed by the Chief Executive come into force and power either through Congressional enactment or via the backdoor route of the bureaus. Yet the bureaus are filled with appointees, none of them elected to office, and hence all of them beyond responsiveness when it comes to following the wishes of the people.

What we have yet to see in these United States is the fact that, in fine, the people will command. For government is always nothing but a tool. It takes human energy to employ any tool, even with automation. Somewhere there must be human minds and human energies directing each operation. And the people will not forever support and use that tool which exploits and misuses them.

So much for the American experiment. It was magnificent. But as a safeguard for human freedom and dignity it has been found wanting. Nor can we turn back to it with confidence that it will yet protect us. A wall once breached is no longer a wall. And with mounting political pressure all about us, the dyke with the hole has become a sieve.

Now we have explored both avenues of remedy taken by people who find their government no longer protecting them as individuals. We have discovered that a change of personnel provides us with no certain guarantee of freedom. And now we learn that even the greatest form of government ever devised has also proved inadequate. The reasons in both cases are similar.

Government is a tool. The nature of the tool is that of a weapon, a gun, a sword, a guillotine.

And when people, be they politicians or otherwise, call upon a gun, a sword, or a guillotine to protect them from others, the device, willy-nilly, works two ways. It can be used defensively. But it is always used aggressively.

15. Anti-Individual Device

Let us examine this idea. Why is it that government, designed for protection, always ends up by attacking the very persons it was intended to protect?

The reason is basic. Government's power, as we have shown, comes from a compulsive unification of all peoples. Government speaks and acts for everyone. It cannot permit nonconformity.

The individual, at variance with governmental policy in any particular, becomes the target of government action, be he saint or sinner. Individualism is always opposed to collectivism. Any government is, by its nature, a collective.

"The best government," said Jefferson, "is the government which governs least." And following up on that thesis Thoreau exclaimed, "Then the very best government would govern not at all."

And here we come to the nature of human beings. For the inescapable fact of human life is that people are different. Their fear may sire governments for purposes of protection. But what they fear varies from person to person. One man may fear a thief, another the tax collector. One man may shun canines and salesmen, another zoning regulations and the foreign-born. Still another will have a veritable phobia about disease germs, whereas his opposite number will shudder principally over government questionnaires.

In the end, the government, seeking only to be a useful tool, will overreach itself and seek to protect both the unprotectable and those not wanting protection.

Its character is universal. If you do not fear disease, the government can, all the same, compel you to fear it. If you love canines and perhaps are yourself a salesman, the government can rule both out of order.

And thus we see the government is at once both protector and predator. It is not that governments begin in virtue only to end in sin. Government begins by protecting some against others and ends up protecting itself against everyone. This is the course of history.

We need only to look at taxation to see the universal flaw in every government. There is no government on earth that, now or ever, sold protection only to those who would willingly pay for it. Nor is there now or ever has been a government which permitted the purchasers of its service to decide just where the protection was to begin and end.

On the contrary, all governments always have and probably always will decide:

- I. who is to be protected against what, and
- II. how much each is to pay for that protection, whether it is desired or not.

Taxation, by definition, is compulsory. Whether or not you approve of a particular policy, practice, or program, and even if the policy, practice, or program is personally injurious to you, the government can and will compel you to pay for it.

For example: There are few Americans today who are in love with communism. Yet every American, by means of both direct and indirect taxation, is helping to spread the teaching of communism. An exchange agreement with the Soviet Union provides that a slick magazine, published in the USSR, shall be made available to readers in this country. Your money pays the shipping charges and helps to underwrite the cost.

But, at least this particular practice is a two-way street. There is an American counterpart, another slick, shipped to Russia and made available there. And the Soviet taxpayer pays at least some of the cost for this exchange.

But the matter goes much further than this. Communism, in essence, is not a Russian program but an economic program. It calls for the elimination of private property and private ownership. Yet your money is being taken from you — try to prevent it, if you will — and is being used in most of our schools, both private and governmental, to promote the idea that capitalism is both decadent and immoral, and that a sharing of wealth is the new economic order. This is communism. And the dissemination of this doctrine is being subsidized by the free enterprisers of America who are compelled at the point of a tax gun to pay all charges.

You cannot successfully object. You cannot withhold that portion of your taxes which would be used to underwrite this practice. Thus, your own money, via the hands of the government, is being used to undermine the very device by which you earned your money in the first place.

16. Is There a Way Out?

When we are all through examining the logical and the illogical regarding government, we inescapably come up against an as yet insurmountable problem. Governments may be intrinsically evil; clearly they operate on the basis of tax predation. And with equal clarity we can discern that the collection of the tax money precedes the vaunted protection thus dearly bought. But the fact remains that human nature being what it is, a certain amount of protection of our lives and property is desirable.

The world is not an ideal place. The people who go to make up our world are, in the main, neither idealists nor saints. Criminals do stalk our streets; viciousness, selfishness, inconsideration, stupidity and worse are all about us. We cannot completely forego the right to protect one's life and property.

Would that we could. But the facts of life are bloody, and in altogether too many instances an inability to protect ourselves defensively would simply encourage the rise of organized aggression.

Therefore, we come to an impasse. When government is employed as a protective device, immorality of necessity appears. But, should we forego protection, at least at this time and place, the immorality might conceivably be expanded by even more brutality and cruelty.

And though it may be true, and there are some who will argue the point valiantly, that we actually require far less protection than we think we do, the fact remains that something must be done, some tool provided, which will offset man's belligerency, at least in individual cases.

Let us, then, state with certainty that some tool of protection must be found. And if we can find nothing better than government, cruel, rapacious, immoral, and unjust though it has proved to be in all of history, then, we must still have government.

However, let us suppose that we are able, by virtue of our advanced knowledge and by virtue of a renewed belief in moral verities, to devise a tool of protection which is superior to government. Ah, there is a thought to conjure with.

We have shown that government is a tool. But in this respect, though it may provide a necessary service, it is no more sacred than any other tool which also provides a necessary service. Government's distinct character comes from the peculiar manner in which it attains to force and power. It derives this power from the compulsive unification of all persons below its exalted level. No other tool occupies this strange elevation. Every other tool of man's devising is a tool which, if man can control himself, will become docile and tractable in his hands.

Government alone, of all man's inventions, is capable of independent life. Government alone, like Mrs. Shelley's terrifying creation of the monster born in Frankenstein's mind, has the power and the ability to turn upon its creators and destroy them.

The question which must one day demand our finest intellectual efforts is: Can we invent or create a tool to protect ourselves from aggression without building into it so much power that ultimately it can turn against the very persons who create it and give it strength?

We cannot yet answer this question. However, avenues of procedure already suggest themselves as offering at least a partial remedy.

Is government the only device we know of self-protection? No, it is not. Voluntary insurance is another device. So are private policemen, private organizations such as the American Legion, night watchmen, merchant police, the Triple A and perhaps a score of others.

We have found, for example, that we can protect ourselves from fire with fire insurance. This does not prevent the fire from occurring, but it can indemnify us from loss in the event the unwanted holocaust occurs. And, similarly, if we hire a private policeman, a private watchman, or a private detective, these men cannot prevent a criminal tendency in the mind of another, but they can and will prevent a crime in some cases, and in others they can and do track down the criminal.

But can government do more? Quite frankly, it cannot. We could pass a law, but fires will continue to occur. We can establish expensive and expansive police departments, yet the criminal mind will still function in its own warped way.

17. The Voluntary Way

We must concern ourselves with morality.

We have, for centuries, struggled to understand more about matter and more about technological things. We now know where to look for a reliable food supply. For ages this knowledge was not available.

We now know how to protect ourselves against extremes of temperature, both by shelter and by clothing. Additionally, we can, within limited areas, control the weather. We have deep freezes and we have roaring furnaces. Air conditioning is not new to us.

But as we look at the progress we have made as humankind, we find that chiefly we have concerned ourselves with material things. Materially, we stand at an advanced position as we compare modern living with prior barbarism.

But we have yet to break the barrier of immorality which surrounds us. We have yet to understand ourselves sufficiently so that we can protect ourselves from aggression in a wholly moral manner. And, if we can devote ourselves to this frontier ever before us, we may yet learn how to cross this invisible boundary and move our society into a completely moral setting. And this would be a fitting climax to the drama of human progress.

If only people would govern themselves. But, alas, they do not. If only people would believe in and practice the Golden Rule and the basic prohibitions of the Decalogue. But people, basically, neither believe nor practice. And even those who devoutly assay these moral heights fall dismally by the wayside.

Yet we do hold certain clues to a better moral climate. We know that men cannot be compelled to be good. They can only be prevented from being bad — a negative condition. We know from bitter experience that men cannot be forced into doing the wise thing, for such a forcement is foolishness.

Therefore, dimly we see that men can be good, but only when they wish themselves to be good. And through the fog and smoke of friction we can make out the fact that wisdom is possible only when the individual has learned to control himself. Great wisdom comes only with great self-discipline and great self-control. And experience, we learn from experience, is the very best and surest of teachers, though the cost is high.

So the word "voluntary" becomes suddenly of inestimable importance.

Men cannot be driven up a slope. But individually, voluntarily, men can and will assay the climb. Further, if their training is proper, if their education is sound, they will long for a moral world with all their hearts. If the longing is born in their breasts, they will inevitably seek the light. And if they do, their seeking will be voluntary and their progress, so long as it is voluntarily conducted, will be certain.

Again we look at insurance and private protective agencies. Have we fully explored all that these devices can perform? We do not think so. This is an age in which both government and insurance ideas have gained great expansion. But government leads the race, twenty to one. This age will probably yet be called, not the age of reason, but the age of compulsion. What reason we have found has led us, immorally, towards compulsion.

For example, we have two kinds of insurance, voluntary and involuntary. The first is purchased willingly by the buyer, because he feels that it is a good buy for him. The second is forced upon him by his government, whatever he thinks of it. The first is moral, the second is immoral. Yet the latter is gaining ground. Still, the very essence of immorality is found in the use some persons make of force in compelling others to do what some think they should.

And we have two kinds of police protection, voluntary and involuntary. The first is paid for voluntarily because someone wants protection and is willing to pay for it. The second is forced upon us all because some people feel we must have it. The first is moral, the second is immoral. Yet the latter is gaining ground.

So there is the great question. Can we yet establish a fully voluntary government ... or, perhaps, to phrase it best, can we devise a tool for our protection which will be paid for only by those who want it, and in whatever amounts the payers deem best?

18. What Can You Do?

We come, finally, to you.

Individually, you are in difficulties, many of them probably not of your own making.

But, of course, in some way, you are responsible for all your difficulties, even when they have been thrust upon you. You, alone, can solve your own problems.

As a member of a community and as a member of a nation, you are in difficulties. Your various governments have taken your energies in the form of frustrating regulations and in the form of mounting taxation, until you stand today almost equated with the victim of a vampire. You are being drained. Let's face it. You have been drained.

The government, you say, has done this to you against your will. This is true. But it is only partially true. For the government is still nothing but a tool of man's devising and you, although you may deny it, have aided and abetted the condition in which you now find yourself. In short, you have, yourself, employed the tool for your own use, only to find that with each use the tool grew stronger and you grew weaker.

Isn't it time you discovered this fact? Isn't it time you learned that whenever you call upon the government to do something for you, the call you make is like food and drink for the bureaucracy? On your calls and your demands, it is nourished.

Without that nourishment it would not grow. It could not.

It is an inescapable fact that what your attention is upon flourishes because of your attention. If you love your home and your family and devote yourself to these things, do they not flourish? And if you turn away and deprive them of your attention, do they not wither, and perhaps ultimately depart?

If you love your business and your work, and devote yourself here, does not your business expand and your work multiply? And if you shirk your business and your work, will they not shrivel and perhaps ultimately turn to dust to be blown away by the winds of chance?

And if you look to the government as your great love, pouring your energies out upon it, coddling it, coaxing it, wheedling it, beseeching it, will it not blossom and wax fat and strong?

But in this latter case, because of its contradictory formation, the government never has anything of its own. It can only gain by your loss.

You can grow with the growth of your family and your home. You can grow with the growth of your business or your work. But you cannot grow with the growth of your government. You must shrink, and from the shrinkage the government grows.

You are on the threshold of a new world. This is true every day of the year and every year of your life. Can you and will you discipline yourself so that you will not employ an agency of coercion and affliction to compel others to support you in your fondest hopes and dreams?

Can you be content with minding your own affairs and living your own life? Or must you inflict your views and your opinions on others by using your agency, government, to compel universal support to your ideas?

Can you and will you raise your head in pride and honor and refuse to receive the slightest governmental "aid," knowing that whatever it may be, it has been wrung from the energies of others?

Will you become a devotee of the American capitalistic system and give your energies to producing wealth and services on a voluntary basis? Will you turn your attention away from government, either as a big brother to help you, an employer to hire you, or a mailed fist to force others into your way of doing things?

The nature of man is such that he can rise to any height if he but will. The nature of government is such that, whatever strength it has, it will be used to amass greater strength by draining away the strength of individuals.

You, alone, can decide where you will stand. If you can and will be strong, the future is yours. If you cannot and will not discipline yourself, the future belongs to the government.

Thus we are confronted with the necessity for most serious introspection. Government is a tool, made necessary by man's weakness. But in the passage of time man, through the employment of an enormous array of other tools, is no longer weak. Yet man clings to government as the first and most important requisite of organized living.

Admittedly, the worthy functions which government can and does perform are necessary. But it must be seen that government is not an end in itself, but a means whereby those functions of security and protection are vouchsafed to humankind.

The question which must be asked is this: Can man obtain the necessary mental objectivity to devise a modern tool, other than government, which will provide for his security and his protection without the evils which are inherent in any and every government ever devised? In a word, can man improve his tool of protection so that its destructive character is eliminated?

Is man, through fear, already addicted to the use of compulsion beyond the possibility of change?

Or is it possible that man may now, in this century of much retooling, set up a protective device which will remain docile to his will; his servant, never his master?

Is modern man dedicated to the axe of force? Or can he exercise his unparalleled skill in tool improvement so that the primitive and prehistoric use of coercion is no longer a necessary adjunct to his own concept of power?



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He had a legendary impact on a whole generation of libertarians.

This monograph was originally published by Caxton Printers in 1959.