

Probably the weakest section of the book is the area dealing with foreign policy. Here Dr. Rothbard has bought every cliché and half-truth of the revisionist historians and new left professors. Perhaps again this is an attempt to square the rather extreme philosophical position he takes on the question of freedom with the practical necessities of the modern world, specifically in the area of foreign relations. Some examples:

Empirically, the most warlike, most interventionist, most imperial government throughout the twentieth century has been the United States.

...the conflict in Vietnam is not so much a 'civil war' as it is a doomed but continuing attempt by the United States to flaunt and suppress the wishes of the great bulk of the Vietnamese population, and to maintain unpopular counterrevolutionary regimes in Indochina by *genocide*, if necessary.

...if we take a sober look at Soviet Russian foreign policy since the Bolshevik Revolution, we find a continuing passion for peace which has sometimes bordered on the suicidal.

...Stalin, far from being expansionist, did his best to accede to American demands in the name of peaceful co-existence, but the United States, in its global expansionism, proved implacable.

It should be pointed out that one who buys this line is either seeking to justify his own pre-conceived mindset or attempting to avoid some hard questions concerning what anarchists would do if they were convinced that they faced an organized state bent on conquest and destruction. How moral is it for a theoretical straitjacket to subject America to foreign domination by a power that seeks to eradicate every bit of individualism from the human fiber? At least in the United States, change is possible. How can libertarianism be advanced under the Communist state?

To be sure, there are some good portions of the book. The chapter on "Welfare and the Welfare State" is excellent and should be read by all concerned with the current budget crisis of the federal government. Economics is a topic on which Dr. Rothbard is well versed and his material is certainly worth reading.

The same cannot be said for his political philosophy, however. At a time when concrete issues such as budget deficits, wage and price controls, higher taxes, and the dismantling of OEO are being debated, it would be of great benefit to the coun-

try if Dr. Rothbard and his followers would address themselves to these issues, rather than weeping at their

local meetings because they had to use a government road to get to their destination. ★

The Anarchist Pipedream

by Frank Donatelli

For a New Liberty, by Murray Rothbard. Pinetree Press, 1973.

Professor Will Herberg once wrote that the great question of the 20th century would be how man occupied his increased leisure time. Freed of the dawn to dusk work day by technological innovation, how could he best utilize this free time for the benefit of himself and society?

Unfortunately, many just do not know what to do. In the late 1960s, bored college students occupied themselves by taking over campus

buildings. College professors pontificated endlessly on "remaking" man or "reforming" ancient institutions. Ideologues of the left and right have always taken great pains in spinning their web of theories, the resulting net being so broad as to encompass every idea and situation possible under the sun.

So it was with Marxists. So it was with socialists, with liberals. And so it is now with the anarcho-capitalists

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has an absolute right to his person and any property he can acquire. Any interference with the person or his possessions is "theft." Government is coercion in that the individuals who live under it have not consented to its establishment; also state taxation "robs" the individual of what is his. Thus government is criminal and should be abolished. In short, anarchy is a moral imperative.

The theoretical justification for the above is a mixture of anarchist absolutist principles and Locke's ideas of natural rights and societal "contract."

As mentioned before, this is hardly new, and a partial response to it would be as follows: There is no such thing as Locke's "state of nature" where everyone is theoretically free; that far from being free, man at birth is probably the most helpless of creatures and totally dependent on others; that at birth absolute freedom is neither socially desirable nor morally imperative; that freedom is a means to an end and not an end in itself; that the end of a society is to accentuate the voluntary and minimize coercion so that virtue may be pursued; that man by his nature is not atomistic but must exist within the community.

In short, freedom is the product not of some mythical state of nature but of the interplay of a number of factors—cultural, historical, sociological—all of which have a hand in dictating the social arrangements and institutions which govern the community. Under this arrangement, liberty is an essential element of the human condition, but it is not the only element, and is not equivalent to anarchy. The role of government is to minimize coercion and expand voluntarism. It must be limited to enhancing the opportunity for each individual to pursue virtue, not to mandate that any particular virtuous act be pursued.

II

The more interesting portion of the book concerns Dr. Rothbard's attempt to apply anarchist principles to the modern world. He gives as good a case as can be made for abolishing government courts, police and army. He makes a valiant attempt to justify this on utilitarian grounds, i.e., the market would be more efficient and less costly in supplying such services.

It would be unfair to attempt to summarize Dr. Rothbard's arguments in favor of this position. They consume a good part of the book and are extremely detailed, covering a

myriad of possible situations. The reader is invited to consider them and then decide for himself what the state of things would be if everyone had their own private police (or contracted with a police company), was free to try in his own court those whom he felt had violated his rights, and could then enforce the sentence, presumably utilizing private jails or electric chairs (assuming the market dictates that it is less costly to dispose of someone rather than incarcerating him for a number of years). Most would consider this an intolerable situation, but an ideologue determined to stand his theoretical ground would not.

It seems that two assumptions run throughout Dr. Rothbard's entire discussion. One is that people always act rationally, in line with market principles of profit maximization. Private streets would be well guarded because if they were not, no one would patronize them and the owners would lose business. Police companies would have to be courteous because if they were not, individuals would not hire them. Courts would have to be fair and impartial because if they were not, they would suffer both financially and reputation-wise in the eyes of the community. But what if street owners were individuals with other concerns and the street was just a side venture. Would they care what happened on them, especially if they can't get favorable court verdicts in their own courts? Police companies might very well reflect the wishes of their paying customers and go out of their way to be nasty to those people who the paying customers do not like, e.g., Blacks or Jews. The fact that these groups would not patronize them would be of little consequence. And courts would most likely reflect not the rule of law (libertarian or otherwise), but the prejudices and interests of their paying clients.

The second assumption is Dr. Rothbard's implicit desire to believe that man is basically good and could live in harmony were it not for the evil state. Though he denies it, it would seem that this is an essential prerequisite for anarchy. It should be evident that if indeed man is imperfect and flawed, a society of anarchy would not be a pleasant place in which to live. If men are greedy and attempt to organize their greed for selfish and non-libertarian ends, what is to prevent constant local warfare from breaking out? How will abolition of the state eradicate or even reduce these ever present weaknesses of man?



led by Murray Rothbard. His whole system is so neat, each idea fitting nicely into its own ideological compartment. As the libertarian scholar John Hospers noted:

The appeal of anarchism to libertarians... is always considerable: if government should stay out of religion, out of education, out of management-labor relations, and out of all other economic matters, well, having gone so far, wouldn't it be nice to say that government should stay out of everything... Having gone so far, why not go all the way? It would be so much more neat and tidy that way, so simple and beautiful, so aesthetically appealing.

This book is interesting not in how it relates (or ever will relate) to current issues, but because it is intellectually stimulating. And though hard debate is healthy for a democracy, it should also be realized that anarchists can only exist in a world where the community they deplore is predisposed to protecting them.

The theory chapters of this "landmark" book are hardly new. Basically, the thesis is this: Each man