

From: INDIVIDUALIST - February 1971 (Vol 3, #2)
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Murray Rothbard's Libertarianism:

A COMMENTARY ON POWER AND MARKET BY U.S. SENATOR MARK HATFIELD

For those who have not examined the question "Why should there be government?" Murray Rothbard's newest book, **Power and Market - Government and the Economy**, will present a particularly challenging experience. For not only does he argue persuasively against the economic functions of government, but also suggests alternative methods of dealing with problems normally assumed by government. In other words, one cannot offhandedly reject the thesis of this book as a flight of fancy.

The problem of rhetoric is always an obstacle to overcome when trying to meaningfully communicate political or social concepts. This is the first difficulty encountered when one is reading **Power and Market**. Even if one has read Dr. Rothbard before, as I have, one must read this book several times to understand what is being said, not because it is so esoteric, but because Dr. Rothbard uses terms and concepts with which one is not usually familiar and which are expressed in a very concise manner. The second obstacle is one's defensiveness, no matter how latent, when presented with the proposition of abolishing government intervention in the economy, which followed to its logical conclusion would mean the aboli-

tion of most, if not all, of the Federal government.

His manner of analyzing the economic realities we are facing today and in turn relating this analysis to its social consequences is singularly unique. He is thoroughly consistent throughout his book, but more importantly, he elucidates a framework from which to view man's role in society and societies' roles with reference to each other. His method of economic analysis, called "praxeology", is a term originated by Ludwig von Mises. The method is "a priori" in nature and unfolds from three basic axioms: 1) "the existence of purposive action," 2) the diversity of human skills and resources," and 3) "the disutility of labor." If Dr. Rothbard's theory is to be questioned, it is here that one should begin.

To more fully understand what Dr. Rothbard is saying it is necessary to look to his earlier writing, particularly his **Man, Economy and State** (two volumes), and to the writings of the man to whom Dr. Rothbard dedicated his two-volume treatise, Professor Ludwig von Mises. For it is in these books, essentially, that the philosophical and economic bases of his libertarianism are delineated in great detail.

In many circles Keynesian economics

has lost a great deal of its credibility because of our experiences over the past decades. And it may well be that praxeological analyses have a greater relevance to the problems we face as a society. I look forward not only to a greater explication of the socio-economic theory of the libertarianism advocated by Dr. Rothbard but to the further application of this praxeological method to the practical problems of today as well. Dr. Rothbard has made valuable contributions to the economic and social philosophy of libertarianism through the praxeological technique, **Power and Market - Government and the Economy** being one of the most significant.

"I heartily accept the motto, 'That government is best which governs least;' and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe, - 'That government is best which governs not at all;' and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have." (Henry David Thoreau) □

(Power and Market is available from the Society for Individual Liberty Bookservice for \$5.65)