

STRATEGY OF THE NEW LIBERTARIAN ALLIANCE

Number One

May Day 1981

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Introduction

by Samuel Edward Konkin III, *Continental Strategist NLA*

Welcome to the first theoretical journal of New Libertarianism. There have been several attempts to publish a journal of libertarian theory—notably *Libertarian Analysis*—and none survived. There are many publications today which are academic career-savers, or watered-down economics for the newcomers, or general interest publications, occasionally perceptive and penetrating, but still primarily entertainment.

All serve their market purpose or they would not be.

Libertarianism is, perhaps, too diverse and pluralist to produce the kinds of journals abounding on Left and Right with a full specified theoretical framework, adjusting as empirical evidence warrants, but mainly analyzing events and competing ideologies for the purpose of mapping out a strategy for the activist, cadre, cell members, or entrepreneur. Libertarianism says too little (but correctly) about too many. It defines who are accepted in the society (and who are not) but not who are *making that society* and who effectively oppose it.

New Libertarianism applies a lens, narrowing and even distorting, to anticipate criticism, but *focusing*. And many libertarian activists have felt that need for focus in recent years and the pull of false paths they *know* will not lead to Liberty but to Power—yet provide focus and direction.

The *New Libertarian Manifesto* was the first document to take libertarianism as a given and develop a strategy that it claimed derived from the constraints and insights of libertarianism. As such it contained the weakness of not having earlier, failed examples to build on and refine from.

With that in mind, the Nucleus of the New Libertarian Alliance requested criticism from the major poles of libertarian thought, hoping that the crossfire would weed out the errors and shake down the framework. The poles, as the author sees it, are most ably represented by Murray Rothbard, Robert LeFevre, Roy Childs, Robert Poole, "Filthy Pierre" (of the *Libertarian Connection*) or Erwin S. Strauss, and Andrew J. Galambos. All of these are poles or nuclei of orbits of thought and generally accepted as fairly distinct.

Galambos refuses to talk to anyone else in the movement, so it was no surprise to receive his non-recognition. Significantly, that is the appropriate Galambosian response and so we have it. Childs, the court intellectual of the Charles Koch-owned faction of anarchocentrists, refused to reply directly but sent back second-hand dark mutterings of an unforgotten slight he had received from *NLM's* author years ago in *New Libertarian Weekly*. This putting personality over principle is the response of the "Kochtopus," then, and is accepted as *their* apt reply to *NLM*.

Poole actually replied to an invitation to critique *NLM* and said he'd find someone around the office who might want to do it. The *Reason* bureaucracy failed to disgorge anything by press time (after several months' warning), and, one supposes, that is *their* appropriate response to *NLM*.

Fortunately, the "top of the Movement" did reply. Murray N. Rothbard proved again that he is never too elevated to stoop to principle, nor, as he indicated by his first footnote, would he let even personal affronts deter him.

The same spirit and ideological nobility is deemable to Robert LeFevre. Filthy Pierre, like the author himself, has a good fannish mentality about "loccing" other publications.

The critiques of the *New Libertarian Manifesto* are printed in full; the responses are not. Something had to give in the space requirements. Nonetheless, the Nucleus of the NLA views the NLM as well-defended and, next issue, we will move to the attack.

Internal New Libertarian criticism and external criticism will never be closed. So to continue the debate, if others wish, *SNLA* will inaugurate a *Letters* column (in smaller type if it gets out of hand) next issue. Write freely!

And next issue, *Strategy of the New Libertarian Alliance #2*, Samuel Edward Konkin III and other libertarian and agorist theorists (now being solicited) will tackle *Marxism* and especially the Leninist model of Revolution and contrast it to the New Libertarian Revolutionary model. (NLA will try to get a worthy representative of a purist "Left Communist" group to participate.) One may reserve a copy (due May Day 1982) for \$2.95.

It's too early to guarantee *SNLA3* yet but undoubtedly it will carry responses to the publication of Konkin's mass-market follow-up to NLM; that is, *Counter-Economics*, the book. And further incursions into the frontier...

[Continued from page thirty-three]

contributes accordingly. As we pass through the stages outlined in the *Manifesto*, the advantages become more tangible and obvious if more diffuse, but I do point out that agorist R&D will be transferred to specific industries for their profit and/or reduction of cost—especially insurance and protection.

Where Pierre sees various degrees of "altruism," I see short-term, medium-range and long-range investment in improving one's surrounding environment—investments which do not clash but are complementary to one's investment in personal freedom and safety.

I could care less about "genetic altruism" and its indulgence.

Pierre does put his finger on the semantic static generated by using terms evolved in politics for the purpose of agorist activism and I hope to see him further working with New Libertarians on developing alternative, clearer labels and popularizing them. (My well-known proclivity for neologizing—coining new words—is prompted precisely to achieve that semantic clarity and free our language of inappropriate associations.)

The general spread and marketing of weapons of mass destruction may well be coming but I fail to see how it will have the *critical* effect of abolishing the State. Further debate on this question (opened in *New Libertarian Weekly*) may be warranted.

—Samuel Edward Konkin III, May Day, 1981

Konkin On Libertarian Strategy by Murray N. Rothbard, Ph.D.

It is good to have the *New Libertarian Manifesto* in more or less systematic form for assessment and criticism. Until now, the Konkinian vision has only been expressed in scattered pot-shots at his opponents, often me.* It turns out that Sam Konkin's situation is in many ways like the Marxists. Just as the Marxists are far more cogent in their criticisms of existing society than in setting forth their vaporous and rather absurd vision of the communist future, so Konkin is far more coherent in his criticisms of the existing libertarian movement than in outlining his own positive agoric vision. This of course is not an accident. For one thing, it is far easier to discover flaws in existing institutions than to offer a cogent alternative, and secondly it is tactically more comfortable to be on the attack.

I. The Konkinian Alternative

In this particular case, Konkin is trying to cope with the challenge I laid down years ago to the anti-party libertarians: O.K., what is *your* strategy for the victory of liberty? I believe Konkin's agorism to be a total failure, but at least he has tried, which is to his credit, and puts him in a class ahead of his anti-party confreres, who usually fall back on fasting, prayer, or each one finding ways to become a better and more peaceful person, none of which even begins to answer the problem of State power, and what to do about it. So before I comment on Konkin's criticisms of current libertarian institutions, I would like to take up his agoric alternative.

First, there is a fatal flaw which not only vitiates Konkin's agoric strategy but also permits him to evade the whole problem of organization (see below). This is Konkin's astonishing view that working for wages is somehow non-market or anti-libertarian, and would disappear in a free society. Konkin claims to be an Austrian free-market economist, and how he can say that a voluntary sale of one's labor for money is somehow illegitimate or unlibertarian passeth understanding. Furthermore, it is simply absurd for him to think that in the free market of the future, wage-labor will disappear. Independent contracting, as lovable as some might see it, is simply grossly uneconomic for manufacturing activity. The transactions costs would be far too high. It is absurd, for example, to think of automobile manufacturing conducted by self-employed independent contractors. Furthermore, Konkin is clearly unfamiliar with the fact that the

* One of his criticisms (NLM page 5) is untrue as well as insulting. Neither I nor the *Libertarian Forum* was ever in any sense "bought" or "bought out" by Charles Koch. The *Libertarian Forum* has never had a penny from outside sources; since its inception, it has been entirely self-financing. And while my two year leave at the Cato Institute was enjoyable in many ways, I lost rather than made money by the deal.

emergence of wage-labor was an enormous boon for many thousands of poor workers and saved them from starvation. If there is no wage labor, as there was not in most production before the Industrial Revolution, then each worker must have enough money to purchase his own capital and tools. One of the great things about the emergence of the factory system and wage labor is that poor workers did not have to purchase their own capital equipment; this could be left to the capitalists. (Thus, see F.A. Hayek's brilliant "Introduction" in his *Capitalism and the Historians*.)

Konkin's fallacious and unlibertarian rejection of wage-labor, however, allows him to do several things. It allows him to present a wildly optimistic view of the potential scope of the black-market. It also accounts for his curious neglect of the "white market," and his dismissal of it as unimportant. In point of fact, even though the black market is indeed important in Russia, Italy, etc., it is enormously dwarfed in importance by the legal, white market. So the Konkinian vision of black-market institutions growing, defending themselves and thus *becoming* the free-market anarchist society of the future collapses on this ground alone. Note that black markets are concentrated either in service industries or in commodities which are both valuable and easily concealed: jewels, gold, drugs, candy bars, stockings, etc. This is all well and good, but it still does not solve the problem: who will make automobiles, steel, cement, etc.? How would *they* fare in the black market? The answer is that they don't fare at all, just as they don't fare in the independent contracting agora.

The point is that these fatal gaps in the Konkinian vision are linked together. By concentrating on such objects as marijuana as his paradigm of the agora, rather than automobiles, steel, Wonder Bread, or whatever, Konkin is able to neglect the overwhelming bulk of economic life and to concentrate on marginalia. Only by this sort of neglect can he even begin to postulate a world of independent contractors or a world of black markets.

And there is another vital point here too. Konkin's entire theory speaks only to the interests and concerns of the marginal classes who are self-employed. The great bulk of the people are full-time wage workers; they are people with steady jobs. Konkinism has nothing whatsoever to say to these people. To adopt Konkin's strategy, then, would on this ground alone, serve up a dead end for the libertarian movement. We cannot win if there is no possibility of speaking to the concerns of the great bulk of wage earners in this and other countries.

It is the same thing with tax rebellion, which presumably serves as part of the agoric strategy. For once again, it is far easier for someone who doesn't earn a wage to escape the reporting of his income. It is almost impossible for wage-earners, whose taxes are of course deducted off the top by the infamous withholding tax. Once again, it is impossible to convert wage-workers to the idea of non-payment of taxes because they literally have no choice. Konkin's airy dismissal of taxation as being in some sense voluntary again ignores the plight of the wage-earner.

I am afraid, indeed, that there is only one way to eliminate the monstrous withholding tax. Dare I speak its name? It is *political action*.

It is no accident, again, that the entire spectrum of the black market movement, from tax rebels to agoric theoreticians, are almost exclusively self-employed. To echo Konkin's distinction, black marketeers might well benefit themselves in the *micro* sense, but they have no relevance to the "macro" struggle for liberty and against the State. Indeed, in a kind of reverse invisible hand, they might even be counter-productive. It is possible that the Soviet black market, for

example, is so productive that it keeps the entire monstrous Soviet regime afloat, and that without it the Soviet system would collapse. This does not mean, of course, that I scorn or oppose black market activities in Russia; it is just to reveal some of the unpleasant features of the real world.

There are other problems with the agoric concept. I tend to side with Mr. Pyro Egon in his dispute with Konkin; for the black market, if it develops at all, is going to develop on its own, and I see no role whatever for Mr. Konkin and the New Libertarian Alliance or the Movement of the Libertarian Left. Konkin speaks correctly of the division of labor. Well, nowhere does the division of labor manifest itself more clearly than in who succeeds in entrepreneurship. If the black market should develop, then the successful entrepreneurs are not going to be agoric theoreticians like Mr. Konkin but successful entrepreneurs period. What do they need with Konkin and his group? I suggest, nothing at all. There is a hint in the NLM that libertarians would *a priori* make better entrepreneurs than anyone else because they are more trustworthy and more rational, but this piece of nonsense was exploded by hard experience a long time ago. Neither do the budding black marketeers need Mr. Konkin and his colleagues to cheer them on and free them of guilt. Again, experience has shown that they do fine on their own, and that urging them on to black market activities is like exhorting ducks to swim.

When we consider, then, the vital importance of wage-work, black markets are already severely limited, and the agorist scenario for the ultimate libertarian goal falls apart. And then there is the final stage where black market agencies use force to defend illegal transactions, tax rebels, *etc.* against the State. Although Konkin doesn't acknowledge it as such, this is violent revolution, and it is simply an historical truth without exception that no violent revolution has come close to succeeding in a democratic country with free elections. So that way is barred too. And it hasn't succeeded all that often even in a dictatorship. The Soviet system has now been oppressing its citizens for over sixty years; and there has been a widespread black market all this time. And yet there is still the Gulag. Why hasn't the black market developed into a Konkinian agora or even hinted at such?

No. Much as I love the market, I refuse to believe that when I engage in a regular market transaction (*e.g.*, buying a sandwich) or a black market activity (*e.g.* driving at 60 miles per hour) I advance one iota nearer the libertarian revolution. The black market is not going to be the path to liberty, and libertarian theoreticians and activists have no function in that market. I think this is why the only *real* activity of Mr. Konkin and his colleagues is confined to annoying members of the Libertarian Party. This hectoring may be bracing for the soul of some party members, but it scarcely serves to satisfy the lifelong commitment the Konkinians have to the cause of liberty. No, agorism is a dead end, and, to use an old Stalinist term, is "objectively counterrevolutionary."

II. The Problem of Organization

I turn now to Konkin's critique of the current libertarian movement, in *NLM* and other writings. There are three basic threads in this critique which are entirely distinct, but which Konkin generally confuses and conflates. These are: the problem of hierarchical organization, the problem of the "Kochtopus," and the Libertarian Party. Generally, Konkin lumps them all together, and thereby confuses all these issues. We must unpack them. Let us do so by first assuming, for the sake of argument, that there is no Libertarian Party, and that there are simply other libertarian institutions, organizations, institutes, magazines, or whatever.

Would Konkin's complaints disappear if the LP collapsed? Clearly not. For there runs through his writings an attack, not only on hierarchical organization but on organization *per se*. He is against joint stock companies because they are organized hierarchically, and seems to be against all other voluntary organizations for similar reasons. He not only opposes wages, he also wants only individual alliances, and not organizations at all.

First, there is nothing either un-libertarian or un-market about a voluntary organization, whether joint-stock or any other. People organize because they believe they can accomplish things more effectively that way than through independent contracting or *ad hoc* alliances. And so they can. So, 1) they are not immoral or unlibertarian, and 2) they are the only way by which almost anything can be accomplished, whether it is making automobiles or setting up bridge or chess tournaments. Konkin's suggested floating affinity groups can accomplish very little, and *that* when only a handful of people are involved. But if more than a handful wish to cooperate on joint tasks, whether steel-making or chess tournaments, an organization becomes necessary.

Organizations of course create problems, and it is really pointless to go on about them. If more than three or four people wish to engage in a joint task, then some people will override the wishes of others (*e.g.* should we paint the office blue or beige?), and there are bound to be power struggles, faction fights, and all the rest. Even corporations, which have to meet a continuing profit test, have these problems, and the difficulties are bound to increase in non-profit organizations, where there is no instant profit-and-loss feedback. So organizations create problems, so what? So does life itself, or friendships, romantic relationships or whatever. Most people think the drawbacks are worth it, and are more than compensated by the benefits of working for and achieving joint goals. But if not, they can always drop out and not belong to an organization; in a free society, they have that privilege. And of course, we are talking here about voluntary organizations. I suspect Mr. Konkin and his colleagues don't like to join organizations. So be it. But those of us who wish to accomplish various goals will continue to do so. And it seems to me we are at least entitled to the acknowledgement that there is nothing in the slightest unlibertarian about organization, hierarchy, leaders and followers, *etc.* so long as these are done voluntarily. If the Konkinians fail to acknowledge this primordial libertarian point, then their libertarian *bona fides* would come into serious question.

III. The Problem of the "Kochtopus"

Konkin has also railed against the beneficence of Charles Koch, not only for being pro-LP, but *also* because he has tended to acquire a "monopoly" of the movement.

Still abstracting from the LP, let us begin by each one of us putting ourselves in Koch's place. You, say, are a multi-millionaire, and you get converted to libertarianism. You're all excited about it, and you want to do something to advance the cause. Things being what they are, the main thing you can contribute is your money. What should you do? The trouble with asking us to make this act of imagination is that most of us can't conceive of ourselves as multi-millionaires, and too many of us have absorbed the primitive populist view of millionaires as evil Fu Manchu characters bent on exploitation. But let's take the case of our multi-millionaire convert. Would Konkin *really* say that he should do nothing, because this might create a "monopoly" of the movement? Do we *not* want to convert multi-millionaires, do we *not* think that money is important in advancing the movement? So it is surely grotesque to send our multi-millionaire packing. Obviously, we should welcome his contributions to the cause and hope for as much as possible. O.K., so you are a multi-millionaire convert to libertarianism. To whom or what should you give your money? Now, this is a considerable responsibility, and since no one can be omniscient our multi-millionaire is bound to make mistakes along the way. But all we can ask of him—or ourselves—is to do the best he can, according to his knowledge.

The multi-millionaire therefore deserves our approbation, our welcome to the cause. Instead, what he inevitably gets—human nature being what it is—will be complaints and attacks without cease. For if A, B, and C (people or institutions) receive his largesse, this inevitably leaves D, E, and F out in the cold, and whether through envy and/or righteous indignation at the wrong path taken, D, E, and F will no doubt yell bloody murder.

To us poor folk it might seem absurd to say that the life of a multi-millionaire is hard and thankless, but it seems clear that this is an important point for us to remember.

But there is more to be said. The critics of the multi-millionaire might say: O.K., it's great that he's giving all that money to the cause, but why does he have to *control* everything? But here again, you are the multi-millionaire, and you want to do the best you can for liberty with the money you give out. Wouldn't you want to have control over how your own money is spent? Hell yes. You'd have to be an idiot not to, and also not care too much either about money or the libertarian cause. There are few multi-millionaires who are idiots.

But how about the Kochian "monopoly?" Here Mr. Konkin should have fallen back on his Austrian economics. Suppose that only one firm is producing aluminum. Should we start yelling at it for being a "monopoly," or should we

hope for *more* firms to enter the industry? Clearly the latter, unless the "monopolist" is using the State to keep other competitors out, which of course Mr. Koch is not doing. Quite the contrary. Koch would be delighted to find other multi-millionaires converted to liberty and giving money to the movement, as would we all. So that the answer to the problem of the Koch "monopoly" is to find a dozen more multi-millionaire libertarians. It is grossly unfair and fallacious to put the blame on the monopolist for his situation.

I submit that Konkin has been egregiously unfair to Charles Koch. The only legitimate criticism of Koch is not the existence of the "Kochtopus" but if the said "Kochtopus" takes a wrong and misguided track. Within Konkin's antiparty perspective, for example, it is perfectly legitimate for him to criticize Koch's tie-in with the Libertarian Party, but not the existence of Koch largesse *per se*.

In many of Konkin's writings, however, one has the impression that simply the receipt of a grant or the taking of a job with Koch is evil *per se*, or, indeed, the taking of any steady job whatsoever (*pace* Konkin on wage-work).

But while there is nothing at all immoral or illegitimate about the existence of a Kochian monopoly in the movement, it does pose grave sociological problems. For if one man or organization constitutes or controls the entire movement, then any mistake of ideology, strategy, or tactics he or it may make will have grave consequences for the entire movement. If a small organization makes a mistake, however, the consequences are not so catastrophic. Here is a real problem, which it is impossible to see how to cure, short of finding a dozen more people like Koch. (Surely, Konkin's putative solution of Koch disappearing from the libertarian scene is a "remedy" far worse than the disease.) The only thing I can think of is trying to persuade Koch to set up diverse and "competing" institutions in the movement, much as corporations often set up competing profit centers within their own organization. (To some extent this is already being done, as in the case of such an estimable institution as the Council for a Competitive Economy.)

IV. The Problem of the Libertarian Party

Much of the Konkinian critique of the LP has been conflated with attacks on organization and on "monopoly" *per se*, and I think I have shown that all these criticisms are either fallacious or miss the point—the main point being that these institutions are voluntary and are worth the problems they inevitably bring, at least to those who participate in them. None of these institutions are unlibertarian, and the difficulties they bring in their wake are the problems of life.

We turn to Konkin's *bête noire*, the Libertarian Party. There are two important questions to be resolved about the LP: (1) is it evil *per se*?, and (2) assuming that it isn't, is it a legitimate or even necessary strategy for libertarians to adopt?

I am going to assume for the moment that a libertarian political party (or for that matter, other forms of political action, such as lobbying) are *not* evil *per se*. But if that is true, then all of Konkin's running arguments about the LP's hierarchical nature, its power struggles, faction fighting, *etc.* are no more than the problems inherent in all organizations whatever. And this we have already disposed of.

More important, I see no other conceivable strategy for the achievement of liberty than political action. Religious or philosophical conversion of each man and woman is simply not going to work; that strategy ignores the problem of power, the fact that millions of people have a vested interest in statism and are not likely to give it up. Violent revolution will not work in a democratic political system. Konkinian agorism is no answer, as I have shown above. Education in liberty is of course vital, but it is not enough; action must also be taken to roll back the state, specifically to *repeal* State laws. Like price control or the withholding tax. Or even like marijuana laws. Despite their widespread non-enforcement, there are always *some* people who get cracked down on, especially if the police wish to frame them for other reasons. Tax rebels are admirable, but only in "micro" terms; the taxes are still there, and the wage-earners pay them. Tax rebellion is not a strategy for victory. Single issue lobbying groups (*e.g.* anti-draft organizations, taxpayer organizations, gold standard groups, *etc.*) are fine and admirable, but they do not complete the job. For two basic reasons: (a) because they are single-issue, and therefore cannot educate anyone in libertarianism across the board, and (b) because they cannot do the vital job of repealing the statist laws. They can only *urge* the repeal of the draft, for example; they can't actually *do* the repealing. Why should we cut ourselves off from this necessary and vital step of doing the repealing? Of course if one believes with Bob LeFevre that it is *equally* immoral to repeal as to impose the draft, then the repeal of anything is out of the question. But I will shout hosannahs for any repeal of statism, and do not concern myself with the "coercion" of those who'd like to keep the draft and are deprived of it.

Before the existence of the LP, the only repealing could be done by Democrats and Republicans, and so libertarians engaged in this form of political action had to try to find the more libertarian, or rather, the less anti-libertarian candidate. Contrary to Konkin, there *have* been political parties in the past, especially the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that, while not anarchist, were admirable forces for laissez-faire. They didn't smash the State (not their intention anyway), but they did accomplish an enormous amount for liberty, they ushered in the Industrial Revolution, and we are all in their debt. I think of the Democratic Party in the U.S., the Liberals in England, the Progressives in Germany, *etc.* Historically, classical liberal political parties have accomplished far more for human liberty than any black markets.

But empirically, of course, neither major party at this point is worth a damn, and so a Libertarian Party provides a welcome alternative, of actually permitting us to engage in libertarian political action.

A Libertarian Party presents many difficulties. For one thing, there is the constant temptation to substitute numbers of votes for profits as the test of success, and this means the dilution of principle to appeal to the lowest common denominator of voters. This temptation has been yielded to with great enthusiasm by the Clark campaign. But the price of liberty is eternal vigilance, never more so than in a libertarian political party. The LP needs continual self-criticism and, yes, Konkinian criticism as well. Fortunately, it has an admirable platform; now a struggle must get underway to get the party's candidates to stick to that platform. The struggle against opportunism is not going to be easy, and it may not even be successful. But the LP is a valuable enough institution that the battle is worth it. Which is why it needs the Radical Caucus.

And why it needs libertarians who are educated in libertarian principles and are concerned to maintain them. One problem with this particular LP is that in a deep sense it was founded prematurely: before there were enough activists around to make it work and to educate newcomers. The LP grew like Topsy; as a result, very oddly for an ideological party, there are literally no institutions within the Party (except for the Radical Caucus) engaged in education or discussion of principles or political issues. The LP is one of the strangest ideological parties in history; it is an ideological political party where most of its members display no interest whatever in either ideology or politics. Marxist groups generally don't found parties for a long time; first, they build "pre-party formations" which gather the strength and the knowledge to launch a regular party. We had no such formation, and are suffering the consequences. But here the party is, and we have to make do with what we have.

So the Libertarian Party is vital if not necessary to repealing statism. And contrary to Konkin's suggested timetable of a millenium, a militant and abolitionist LP in control of Congress could wipe out all the laws overnight. All that would be needed is the will. No other strategy for liberty can work. And yet, all this pales before the most important problem: Is a Libertarian Party evil *per se*? Is voting evil *per se*? My answer is no. The State is a Moloch that surrounds us, and it would be grotesque and literally impossible to function if we refused it our "sanction" across the board. I don't think I am committing aggression when I walk on a government-owned and government-subsidized street, drive on a government-owned and subsidized highway, or fly on a government regulated airline. It *would* be participating in aggression if I lobbied for these institutions to continue. I didn't ask for these institutions, dammit, and so don't consider myself responsible if I am forced to use them. In the same way, if the State, for reasons of its own, allows us a periodic choice between two or more masters, I don't believe we are aggressors if we participate in order to vote ourselves more kindly masters, or to vote in people who will abolish or repeal the oppression. In fact, I think that we owe it to our own liberty to use such opportunities to advance the cause. Let's put it this way: Suppose we were slaves in the Old South, and that for some reason, each plantation had a system where the slaves were allowed to choose every four years between two alternative masters. Would

it be evil, and sanctioning slavery, to participate in such a choice? Suppose one master was a monster who systematically tortured all the slaves, while the other one was kindly, enforced almost no work rules, freed one slave a year, or whatever. It would seem to me not only not aggression to vote for the kindly master, but idiotic if we failed to do so. Of course, there might well be circumstances—say when both masters are similar—where the slaves would be better off not voting in order to make a visible protest—but this is a tactical not a moral consideration. Voting would not be evil, but in such a case less effective than the protest.

But if it is morally licit and non-aggressive for slaves to vote for a choice of masters, in the same way it is licit for us to vote for what we believe the lesser of two or more evils, and still more beneficial to vote for avowedly libertarian candidates.

And so there we have it. Konkinian strategy winds up being no strategy at all. Konkin cripples libertarian effectiveness by creating moral problems where none exist: by indicting as non-libertarian or non-market a whole slew of institutions necessary to the triumph of liberty: organization, hierarchy, wage-work, granting of funds by libertarian millionaires, and a libertarian political party. Konkin is what used to be called a "wrecker;" let some institution or organization seem to be doing good work for liberty somewhere, and Sam Konkin is sure to be in there with a moral attack.

And yet, Konkin's writings are to be welcomed. Because we need a lot more polycentrism in the movement. Because he shakes up Partyarchs who tend to fall into unthinking complacency. And especially because he cares deeply about liberty and can read-and-write, qualities which seem to be going out of style in the libertarian movement. At least we can count on Sam Konkin not to join the mindless cretins in the Clark TV commercials singing about "A New Beginning, Amer-i-ca." And that's worth a lot. **Murray N. Rothbard, November 10, 1980**

Reply to Rothbard by Konkin

Murray N. Rothbard's vigorous assault is refreshing; I'm not sure even I would have taken my first major theoretical attempt seriously if it had not evoked Dr. Rothbard at his trenchant top-of-form. After all, Rothbard and his neo-Romantic view of Ideas as almost clashing super-heroes and villains inspired and maintained many, if not most, of us libertarian activists, most assuredly myself.

Having been offered a field of honour, Rothbard throws the gauntlet down swiftly: "I believe Konkin's agorism to be a total failure." From then on, it's lunge, parry and slash.

In fine form, Rothbard, alas, is decidedly short of actual weapons. His accusation of a fatal flaw—seemingly *the* fatal flaw—of agorism is so irrelevant to the basis of agorism that it is barely mentioned *en passant* and in a footnote of the *New Libertarian Manifesto* (footnote ★, p. 21).

Before I dismiss it as criticism of agorism, let me point out that a real debate is justified here between Rothbard (and many, many others, to be sure) and myself (and quite a few) on the validity of hiring oneself out. The *necessity* of it is in question (cybernetics and robotics increasingly replace drudgery—up to and including management activity); the *psychology* of it is in question (selling one's personal activity under another's direction and supervision encourages dependency and authoritarian relationships); and the *profit* in it is open to question (only the rarest skills—acting, art, superscience—command anywhere near the market reward of even low-level entrepreneurship).

Having said that, it remains that this debate is irrelevant in the context of the validity of agorism. Surely, both Rothbard and I would agree on the desirability of increase of entrepreneurs in our society; surely we would both desire more entrepreneurs of libertarianism. Rothbard would simply "let it happen" (*laissez passer*), finding the origins of entrepreneurs mysterious. My own experience is that entrepreneurs are made, not born, and not with that great a difficulty so that "entrepreneurizing (the production of) entrepreneurs" is a profitable activity.

But *ceteris paribus*, as the Maestro says, and let us hold the number of entrepreneurs constant. How does that affect agorism? It makes it difficult to convert libertarians to counter-economic entrepreneurship, but they still can (and ought) to become counter-economic capitalists and workers—even academics! (George H. Smith has blazed trails in becoming a largely counter-economic philosopher!) But when we're talking about converting maybe two million libertarians (at present) to counter-economics and forty million or so counter-economists (already proven to have strong entrepreneurial component) to libertarianism, the loss of a few thousand extra entrepreneurs seems less than crucial. Moreover, a degree of overlap already exists between libertarians and counter-economists—a *high* degree in my associations.

Again, in passing only, my own observations are that independent contracting *lowers* transactions costs—in fact, nearly eliminates them relative to boss/worker relationships running the gamut from casual labor with annoying paperwork and records to full-scale Krupp worker welfarism. But this is an empirical question, one, as Mises would say, not even for economists but economic historians. Why my Austrian credentials should be called into question over such an observation is inexplicable—save as an act of verbal intimidation. *En garde*, then.

And wage-labor's historical benefit may have been as great as the invention of the diaper—but surely toilet-training (in this case, entrepreneurialization) is even a more significant advance?

With the side-excursion over, we turn to Counter-Economics, admittedly the basis of agorism and the New Libertarian Strategy. Rothbard finds *NLM* neglecting the "white market"—yet there is one crucial point on which it is most definitely not neglected, here or in my other Counter-Economic writing. The

agorist imperative is to *transform* the White into Black. Nothing could be clearer. To do so is to create a libertarian society. What *else can a libertarian society mean* in economic terms but removing market activity from the control of the State? Market activity not under control of the State is black market. "Market" activity under the control of the State is white market and we are against it.

To illustrate, slaves building pyramids are white market. Slaves who run away, deal on the side stones and tools they ripped off, and otherwise engage in non-slave activity are black market—and *free* to that extent. What should the libertarian view be toward white-market pyramid building? Or, if you think pyramids would not exist in a free society but aqueducts might, what should our view be toward aqueduct building on the white market *vs* black-market water smuggling? New Libertarians urge the slaves to screw the aqueduct and go for their private buckets until such time as aqueducts can be built under voluntary arrangements. Would Rothbard suggest anything else? Gradual phasing out of aqueduct construction and hence gradual phasing out of slavery?

Rothbard's abolitionist credentials are not challenged, though my own treatment on such matters may impel me otherwise. But a mainly innocent businessman who pays taxes is enslaved to that extent and surely his going black by dodging or defying the taxes (whichever works best) is the *immediate* emancipation of this slave? How can Rothbard reject any Counter-Economic moves by a white marketeer that has less than 100% risk of apprehension without yielding his abolitionist *bona fides*?

Rothbard's listing of counter-economic services and goods are interesting in one respect: of "jewels, gold, drugs, candy bars, stockings, *etc.*" only one—drugs—is mentioned in the *Manifesto*. True, *Counter-Economics* is only now being published chapter by chapter, but even so, the few examples I gave were anything but a few service industries or easily concealed goods. Here is a list, sifted from pages 16 and 17, which *were* mentioned: "food to television repair;" an entire country "Burma is almost a total black market"—this *does* include heavy industry, although Burma has less than the heavy industry of India which is mostly black; the large "black labor" force of Western Europe; housing in the Netherlands; tax evasion in Denmark; currency control evasion in France; "underground economy" tax-free exchanges in the U.S.; "drugs including laetrile and forbidden medical material;" "prostitution, pornography, bootlegging, false identification papers, gambling, and proscribed sexual conduct between consenting adults;" trucking (the *majority*, by the way); smuggling at all levels; and misdirection of government regulators. All of these are not petty but, consciously or otherwise, aggregate big businesses!

Automobiles *are* made counter-economically. Let me count the ways: shipping them across borders and evading taxes or controls—whether physically or on paper; illegal alien labor for assembly-line production; skimming of parts by management, labor, or even with knowledge of the owners, which then go to produce custom cars; auto plant executives hired as "independent consultants;" design, research, engineering, executive and computer "consultants" all paid in partial or full counter-economic terms; union "corruption" to make sweetheart deals to avoid labor (State) regulations; OSHA and other inspectors bought off or misdirected; "unsold" product written off inventory and taxes and then sold; . . . forget it, I cannot possibly count *all* the ways. And next to autos, steel and cement have positively *unsavory* reputations—when it comes to "white collar" crime.

But there is a problem of scale here. Large, cartelized industries can buy politicians and gain their advantages from the State *directly*. True, anyone about to be apprehended by the State, can, should, and does pay off, bribe, and apply "grease" to the State's enforcers. But what highly competitive industry with a large number of producers can effectively buy votes and politicians—and hence be tempted into using their political clout offensively? Big industry in the cartelized sense is no breeding ground for libertarian support but rather for the State's vested interests. However, there is no need to confuse large scale of production with oligopolist characteristics, as Rothbard seems to be doing here.

Finally, as we close out this area, Rothbard accuses me of ignoring the working class. Considering how often he's had the charge leveled at him, one might expect a bit more perceptivity if not sensitivity. What are plumbers, mechanics, carpenters, welders, drivers, farm workers, pilots, actors, accountants, engineers, technicians, lab assistants, computer programmers and just keypunch operators, nurses, midwives, paramedics and orthomedics (doctors), salesmen, public relations people, bartenders, waitresses, writers, factory workers, lawyers, executives, and all types of repairmen if not workers, covering the entire spectrum of proletarianism?

All of that list are at least 20% counter-economic and many are over 50%. If they do not take the first step by becoming independent contractors toward economic liberty, then their employer does (tax-free tips for waitresses, off-the-book illegal alien factory workers, agents handling it for actors, writers, and so on). I challenge Dr. Rothbard to find *any legitimate economic field* (not serving the State) that cannot be counter-economized, ten that cannot be counter-economized without organizational or technological innovation, or a hundred that cannot be counter-economized without significant gain in organizational efficiency and profit. "Konkinism" has plenty to say to everyone who is not a statist.

Rothbard's claim that political action is superior and preferable to civil disobedience in the lightening of the levy is an incredible distortion of history coming from the one who converted *me* to revisionism. There has never been a single repeal of taxation or significant cut (save a few minor ones in recent years for purposes of Keynesian tinkering and now Lafferite "less gets more") that did not result from mass refusal to pay or the threat of such disobedience. Furthermore, political action has resulted in shifts in the tax base and higher total plunder—such as the infamously spectacular debacle of Proposition 13 here in California.

Rothbard's agreement with Pyro Egon is ungraciously spurned by Mr. Egon who informs me that what he sees as my "political-like activity" (NLA, MLL) will not generate more entrepreneurs but that entrepreneurs are indeed "make-able." Rothbard, in subsequent correspondence, added that he believes entrepreneurs are born and not made—or at least not make-able.

"Successful entrepreneurs are not going to be agoric theoreticians like Mr. Konkin but successful entrepreneurs period. What do they need with Konkin and his group?" How about, "Successful businessmen are not going to be

economic theoreticians like Dr. Rothbard but successful businessmen period. What do they need of Dr. Rothbard and his group?" Or "successful engineers are not going to be physics theoreticians like Dr. Einstein..." Or, "successful writers are not going to be English instructors like Professor Strunk..." Need I belabor the Rothbard fallacy?

Rothbard's position on libertarians being dichotomized from entrepreneurs is absolutely monstrous to me. "Libertarian" has nothing to do with what one *says* but with what one *does*. Hence a libertarian *must* be more trustworthy and have a more rational understanding of the market or he/she is *not* a libertarian regardless of what they beguilingly profess. This is the basis for my muckraking for which Dr. Rothbard commends me. And, on the whole, I find the same lack of black-colored glasses in him, I hasten to add.

And what personal experience or academic study leads Rothbard to conclude that pre-libertarian counter-economists do just fine without agorists "to cheer them on and free them from guilt." My personal experience leads me to precisely the opposite conclusion—and I have cancelled cheques of contribution and letters of gratitude to prove it.

In short, whatever planet that the good doctor is describing in contradiction to my counter-economy sure isn't Earth.

Rothbard's statement that violent revolution (what *other* kind is there against a ruling class—would he like to mention an Establishment that stepped down peacefully?) never succeeded in history distorts either the language or history. Either he is saying that no revolution has been libertarian enough to triumph without its contradictions bringing it down (true, but then irrelevant to bring it up as precedent) or he is saying that no group overthrew a ruling class using democratic means of oppression. The latter is not only false but a direct reversal of history. Nearly all somewhat successful revolutions in recent history have overthrown precisely democratic trappings: American Revolutionaries vs the democratic British Imperialists; Jacobin Revolutionaries vs the bourgeois *assemblée*; Liberal Revolutionaries against the Czar's *Duma* (March 1917) and the Bolshevik revolution against the Liberals and Social Democrats (November 1917); the *falange* against the Spanish Republic (1936); Peron's shirtless ones against the Argentine parliament; the National Liberation Front of Viet Nam vs the South Vietnamese parliament (at least until near the end); the popular overthrow of Allende's democratically-elected regime (with Pinochet co-opting the revolution for the military); and the recent overthrow of the democratically-elected but right-wing president of El Salvador by a centrist "popular" junta. This list is *not* exhaustive. A claim that "violent revolution" has *only* succeeded in "democratic countries with free elections" would be nearer the mark, and is often used by Latin American militaries as justification for preventive coups.

All of the above revolutionary groups have their credentials open to libertarian question, to be sure—but who has not so far? To close up this side issue, either Rothbard is saying that all "violent" overthrows of States were not revolutions because they were not libertarian (in which case the libertarian case is untried) or he is historically wrong.

Rothbard has *chutzpah* to demand I separate libertarianism from counter-economists because the latter don't need it—and then turn around and ask why the Russian counter-economists have not condensed into agoras. Human action is *willed* action; without entrepreneurs of libertarianism, it will not be sold. Even so, my estimation of the Soviet scene matches that of several Russian dissidents that Russia is a powderkeg waiting to go up. The Polish situation, of course, fits the agorist paradigm perfectly, right down to the counter-economic workers being co-opted by the partyarch-like Solidarity union.

Rothbard thus fails to make any substantive case against counter-economics and hence agorist strategy. He shoots at peripherals and warps either language or history to make his case. Still, our disagreement *seems to me* largely one of misunderstanding, and misunderstanding of verifiable facts, not speculative theory. This is hardly surprising since—to my knowledge—we share the same premise and analytic methods. Considering that I adopted mine from him, it's even less surprising.

Rothbard's critique of New Libertarianism seems to rest on seeing tips of icebergs and dismissing the vast bases. He sees only the one percent of the economy thought of as "black market" and not the 20-40% of the economy the IRS(!) sees as "underground" and double *that* to make up the whole Counter-Economy which the IRS ignores as irrelevant to taxation. It takes a *libertarian*, educated by Rothbard and others, to perceive a common characteristic and sum the anti-statist whole.

And the same can be said of Rothbard's view of my activities and the hundreds of other New Libertarian Allies around the world. The small but warranted attention we pay to his few deviations seem prominent to him and understandably so. The somewhat larger amount of public criticism we have of the LP and other activities he is most interested in whether in our publications or at public forums are most of what interests him and remains with him. The 10,000 people I conservatively estimate that have called themselves libertarians after primary or secondary contact with me and my hard-core allies he never met and hence they are invisible. The network of counter-economic businesses that we are painstakingly nurturing and the millions of dollars cumulatively exchanged "invisibly" are again understandably invisible to him as well.

I for one see no real barrier to re-convergence ("regroupment" as the Marxists would say) between Rothbard and his "sane, sober, anarchist center" and us "ultra-left deviationists." Rothbard's remaining criticism is really not that germane to the *Manifesto* itself, though it makes up the majority of his article. Yet in some ways it is the most telling criticism of me personally in that it vitiates his compliment to my writing ability, when I must have obviously failed to communicate effectively. Most of his criticisms of me are misreadings in the latter part, and I will but list and deny them where urgent. Of course, the Party Question is another problem entirely.

New Libertarianism does have an organizational preference. Other forms of organization might then be considered non-New-Libertarian but not necessarily "unlibertarian" or even non-agorist. What the New Libertarian Strategy seeks is to optimize action to lead to a New Libertarian society as quickly and cleanly as possible. Activities that lead to authoritarian dependency and passive acceptance of the State are sub-optimal and frowned on; action that is individualistic, entrepreneurial and market-organized are seen as optimal.

With that constantly in the reader's awareness (pages 22, 23, and 24 of *NLM* are a long disclaimer to this very point!), it is obvious that there are no moral (other than individual self-worth) questions involved in organization and hierarchy. (My "lumping them all together" that Rothbard decries might be considered integration of concepts by others.)

Nowhere have I ever opposed joint-stock companies (see page 23 again where they are specifically affirmed). *After* I penned *NLM* I set up precisely that to own *New Libertarian* magazine. I assume we both continue to oppose the statist perversion of joint-stock companies into limited-liability corporations.

I have never suggested "floating affinity groups." Should Dr. Rothbard set up a general Libertarian Alliance which runs no candidates and engages in no statism, I will take out a hundred-year membership immediately. I urge him to "call me out" on this point.

I see *fewer* problems in organization than Rothbard does and can easily see some organizations not having any.

There is a bit of irony in Rothbard's spirited defense of the "Kochtopus" since his own defection but I'll let that pass. I have to mention his secession from and opposition to it because that, effectively, ends my major objection to it and I find it relatively harmless and conceivably needing my defense in the near future as the chorus of opposition swells. To the extent that my early attacks are responsible for the demonopolization of the Movement I am thankful.

For the record, my aim in as spectacularly drawing attention to the monocratism around Koch's money as I did was a warning. Too many neo-libertarians think only taking money from the State leads to dependency and control. True, it is not *immoral* in a libertarian sense to become a billionaire's kept writer or lap-activist but it hardly serves the movement's image *or substance* and hence is un-New-Libertarian. I knew the rest of the Left would attack libertarians for being a plutocrat's tool (as *Mother Jones* eventually did) and took action to show the existence of diversity and independence. Off-hand, I'd say it worked.

I agree with all of Rothbard's defense of millionaire libertarians and have a few (not *multi*-millionaires to be sure) in alliance with me. His solution to increase competition in the Movement is and was my solution. I doubt that having Koch compete with himself is a viable answer, though; even Rothbard seems hesitant about suggesting it.

My being "unfair to Charles Koch" requires a bit of semantic care. I have never implied that Charles Koch personally was motivated to do anything. *Anybody* who threw millions into the Movement with a bit of judgment in buying up institutions would have produced the same results.

I'll take Rothbard's and LeFevre's—who know him personally—word that Koch is a great guy. May he profit richly and evade the State forever! (But may he never buy another politician.) And may he contribute to his heart's content to any Libertarian or Libertarian organization (save the LP). Gee, what a great movement when a poor activist like me can be so generous to an oil billionaire!

But I'll go *further* than Rothbard in my willing recognition of the positive personal characteristics of the Kochtopus. Roy Childs may be cranky and unforgiving at times but he's a fun, erudite person of superior taste, no more deviationist than Dr. Rothbard. Jeff Riggensbach remains a friend, associate and sometime ally even working full-time for Koch's *Libertarian Review*. Joan Kennedy Taylor, Victoria Vargas, Milton Mueller—whom did I leave out?—I've had nothing but enjoyable contacts with them all. Even Ed Crane

(Rothbard's—ahem—*bete noir*) is a laugh a minute with a ready handshake and a fast quip who serves Liberty as he sees best for him and the Movement. May none of us ever sink to *ad hominem*.

Finally, the Libertarian Party. Rothbard says he will "assume for the moment that a libertarian political party... is *not* evil *per se*." I wonder how open he would be to assuming the State is not evil *per se* and then continuing the discussion of some legislation, let us see where it leads him. It seems to lead to the wonder of repeal of laws.

Now Rothbard's historical acumen seems to have failed him again. Since when did the State repeal anything from the Corn Laws to suburban property tax *unless it had lost authority to maintain that law*? First comes counter-economic scoff-lawing, then mass civil disobedience, then the threat of insurrection, and only *then* repeal. No, I don't agree with LeFevre that it is *immoral* to repeal the draft (assuming LeFevre would say precisely that) but it is immoral to support politicians to oppress us because they might relieve one oppression. For all the money, time and energy that needs to go into electing a politician good on one or a few issues, how many could be directly freed and their risk of apprehension reduced in tax evading, draft evading, regulation evading, and so on? Nor do you need exhort the evaders to contribute to a noble cause but simply offer—and some sell this for exorbitant fees!—instruction on how to do beat detection and watch them go for it... *freeing themselves*, not being freed by someone else.

Votes *are* the "profits" of a political party. A party is an organ of the State whose overt purpose is to vie for control of the State and whose covert one is to co-opt support—sanction of the victim. The number of votes dictate the number of successfully elected officials and their share of power and plunder *and* the number of those still accepting the State's legitimacy and possible usefulness. Crane and the Clark Campaign were only acting in accordance with their nature *qua* partyarch. As Frank Chodorov might have said, "The way to get rid of sell-outs in LP jobs is to get rid of LP jobs."

Let's take up those political parties Rothbard *now* finds admirable. It is clear that the Democrats were not so lovable in *Conceived In Liberty* when, as Jefferson Republicans, they fought the Anti-Federalists and co-opted opposition to the Constitution. Did Jackson, the agent of Nullification's defeat; Van Buren, the archetype of boss politics; Polk, the anti-Mexican imperialist; or Pierce and Buchanan, the defenders of slavery; redeem this tainted beginning?

And the British Liberals were condemned by Rothbard for leading Liberty's advocates into defense of Empire and World War. Nor did the moderate minarchists—let alone the many anarchists even then—of the time have any use for Democrats or Liberals. Those minarchist reformers were then in the Free Soil Party in the U.S. and the Philosophic Radical Party in Britain, respectively.

It would be *guache* of me to remind Dr. Rothbard who invented the Radical Caucus and then discarded it when it served nothing but "objectively counter-revolutionary" ends so I'll pass this section up.

"A militant and abolitionist LP in control of Congress" begs the question—how did it get there? How *could* it get there? George Smith's scenario seems far more plausible. In fact, the LP *will* be in power during the final stages of agorist revolution to lure away our marginal allies and ensnare the unwary with "Libertarian" newspeak. The LP will be put in power as soon as the Higher Circles need it there. I have no doubt that Dr. Rothbard will be the first to notice and denounce the collaboration.

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Can you imagine slaves on a plantation sitting around voting for masters and spending their energy on campaigning and candidates when they could be heading for the "underground railway?" Surely they would choose the counter-economic alternative; surely Dr. Rothbard would urge them to do so and not be seduced into remaining on the plantation until the Abolitionist Slavemasters' Party is elected.

Rothbard's characterizing me as a "wrecker" is truly surprising to me considering all the libertarian organizations and publications I have built up and supported—more than anyone else save Dr. Rothbard himself, from Wisconsin to New York to California, and in nearly every state, province and country on this globe. Am I supposed to list all the libertarian groups which have *not* been subjected to moral attacks by me? How about every libertarian supper club in Los Angeles and New York? The Society for Individual Liberty, Society for Libertarian Life, the old California Libertarian Alliance and Texas Libertarian Alliance, the British Libertarian Alliance, the Future of Freedom annual conference, the Southern Libertarian Conference...oh, this is ridiculous. Yes, I stopped beating my wife—even if I'm not married.

The only things I've wrecked are the wreckers of our once party-free movement, defence of partyarchy and compromise of libertarianism in general. Is Rothbard claiming that he averted his eyes from those leaving "The Plumb Line" because they might otherwise be doing good work?

In conclusion, Rothbard and I continue to fight for the same things—and against the same things. Hopefully we will continue to fight in our own ways, reaching those the other missed. And most hopefully may we reduce our time and energy spent on fighting each other to free resources against the common enemy. I shall let no outstretched hand be passed up.

If the New Libertarians and the Rothbardian Centrists must devote some time to our differences ("engage in Revolutionary Dialogue"), let it be devoted first to *understanding* each other—as this exchange is devoted to—and then resolving the differences. Ah, then let the State and its power elite quake!

—SEK3

Return To Babylon

by Robert LeFevre

Samuel Edward Konkin III's *New Libertarian Manifesto* falls short of literary acclaim and fails, at least in my judgment, of sounding a clarion call for the Libertarian cause. This does not imply lack of value or meaning.

The thirty-one pages of small print has definite merit in a number of places and here and there flashes of wisdom illumine a passage.

The author is to be commended for his clear grasp of economic principles and his devotion to marketplace procedures to the extent that he pursues them. This is the major achievement emerging from the so-called "old left" and hopefully signals a burgeoning return to sanity for those who, in earlier days, suffered from internal bleeding, but whose "cure" was the senseless leveling of everyone and everything in society which had managed despite the odds to continue to stay afloat.

Konkin's dedication to what he calls Agoric tactics conveys the substance of his position. It means, in short, that individual libertarians are capable of acting now within a free market context, if they don't permit fear of government to inhibit them altogether. This position deserves to be applauded until the sound echoes and I heartily lend my support to it.

A word of caution should be inserted. The Konkin Manifesto is not the proper place for such advisory words and my addition does comprise a criticism of that document. But it is high time something were said, and this appears to be an appropriate place to say it.

If Agoric enterprises are to make the impact they deserve to make, libertarian enterprisers are going to have to do a *better* job than their competitors already in the field. Thus far, they are not doing it.

Price advantage and a chance to avoid the state by tax evasion is no substitute for integrity. Many who appear as Agoric enterprisers have cheated or otherwise betrayed their customers. Indeed, I have personally found it necessary to be especially careful when dealing with a person calling himself libertarian. All too often the self-styled libertarian has demonstrated a lack of concern for even fundamental honesty. Many have already experienced this lack among conventional marketeers and more of the same is not helpful.

While I would not personally subscribe to the practice, many would-be customers of Agoric enterprises discover to their dismay that if they are cheated through black market patronage, legal action against their suppliers is out of the question. Agoric enterprises cannot succeed without building customer confidence. Persons who are cozened into buying simply because of a warm fellow-feeling philosophically, lose both the feeling and the philosophy when confronted with misrepresentation, poor quality and deception with no recourse.

Indeed, the merit of any philosophy is discovered by the character of its adherents. In this regard, it is clear that many who say they are libertarian are merely employed in obtaining protective coloration.

The foregoing, while not a criticism of the *Manifesto*, opens the door. The ordinary mortal, considering the condition we are in; dominated and coerced by the state at every hand, has tended insensibly to equate all government legislation with repression. But the government is an octopus of many tentacles. There are any number of laws on the books of the state condemning dishonesty, misrepresentation and violence. These are actions which should be repressed; but, of course, repressed by the discipline and determination of the individual.

When disobedience to government is recommended *per se* and *ad hoc* it is a simple matter for the individual to conclude that dishonesty, misrepresentation and violence are acceptable forms of conduct since the state is "always" wrong. There are thousands who fail to make the distinction that while the state is wrong in its methods and procedures in every case, the ends ostensibly sought may very well be desirable and necessary.

The *Manifesto* is lacking at this point. Breaking a law is not a virtuous act *per se* but the *Manifesto* makes it appear so. Thus, it may well occur that some simplistic minds, thinking to obstruct the state, will conclude that any action they take which violates some government ukase is commendable.

The state has been far more clever than many suppose. It has mixed virtue and non-virtue in its demands. But it has used all its instruments of propaganda to cause both the dull and the simplistic to believe that everything that is morally proper is demanded by the state. Thus, law and morals have been inextricably intertwined. To break the law has become immoral; to obey it, moral. Neither is necessarily the case. The objective of a given enactment must be examined for its intrinsic character. With the state we must deal constantly with both ends and means. The means of the state are corrosive and vicious without exception. Libertarians are among those who supposedly have the necessary acumen to determine the difference between ends and means.

Thus, they should be able to practice self-discipline by overt demonstration that they are more honest than those who are only honest because the state appears to compel it.

Indeed, this confusion arising from inappropriate means employed to achieve desirable ends may well be the most profound reason why the state cannot attain its objectives. It is at this point that the *Manifesto* achieves its greatest height. Konkin's explanation of the mandatory use of desirable means that will achieve desirable ends is superb. He champions consistency. It is the core of his opposition to such alleged "libertarian" activities as political party activism.

One of the major objections which I must voice relates to the position taken in the *Manifesto* concerning restoration and/or restitution, following the commission of a crime. While I will quickly assert that Konkin's explanation is both lucid and brief, it does not square with his insistence upon a harmony between ends and means.

If each individual human being has a right to his own life and property then it follows that no individual has a rightful claim to the life or property of any other. In his zeal to satisfy the wishes of those who say they have been

victimized, Konkin sets forth an argument, sometimes brilliant, sometimes sophist in which it appears that the individual having rights to his own life and property, loses those rights if and when he violates the property boundary of another.

If such a conclusion is valid, then it follows that the only persons who have rights are persons who do not violate property boundaries. If this proposition is accepted, then the concept of rights applies only to a limited number of persons and it is based upon their behavior and not upon their nature as human beings.

Now the fundamental nucleus around which the notion of rights orbits, is that the concept must universally apply or be meaningless. If the concept of rights is to be delimited, applying only to those persons who behave in a specific manner then we have a concept of privilege and not a concept of rights.

If we are to accept the notion of privilege as the core to our social structure we are at once reverted to feudalism. Only those who behave as the Lord dictates have the privilege of living. The Lord has the "divine" right to eliminate others, since they had no rights of their own in the first place.

But Konkin wastes little time on such niceties. Rather, he makes it appear that the criminal has not only lost his rights, but that his victim has gained rights over him and, thus, the victim to a large degree, becomes the owner and possessor of the criminal and may dispose of him according to the wishes of the victim, ameliorated perhaps by the pleas of a third-party insurer or other arbitrator.

This is the argument of the Statist. But having denounced the state in the most specific and conclusive terms, Konkin now embraces the state procedures as a major virtue. While it is wrong for the state to claim the life or property of anyone because no one is the property of the state, it is entirely acceptable for the victim to lay claim to restitution and restoration at the cost of the criminal. Indeed, Konkin describes restitution and restoration as a *moral imperative*. But that is what the state says.

Then citing Rothbard, and the Tannehills as pioneers in this area, Konkin offers us a paragraph which I repeat here in its entirety so that its character can be judged.

"First, always leaving out those who choose not to participate, one insures oneself against aggression or theft. One can even assign a value to one's life in case of murder (or inadvertent manslaughter) which may range from the taking of the violence-initiator's life to taking replaceable organs (technology willing) to restore life, to the payment to a foundation to continue one's life work. What is crucial here is that the victim assigns the value of his life, body and property *before* the mishap. (Exchangeable goods may simply be replaced at market rate. See below.)"

If I understand this proposal, the victim of a crime gains a property right, not only over the criminal's property, but, depending on the nature of the crime, over the victim's person and even the victim's life.

Further, and based upon what has gone before as well as upon the quotation used, it is morally mandatory that the victim get back *more* than was taken from him. It is this margin which is viewed as a deterrent against future crime.

Somehow, at this juncture, I wish that Konkin was less familiar with science fiction. I am swept back to my boyhood days and the wonderful stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs, most particularly his classic *Mastermind of Mars* Ras Thavas and his protagonist, Vad Varo.

The *Manifesto* has invited us to travel in time in an effort to recognize the magnificence of a truly libertarian society. I have found it astonishingly easy to comply. By the arguments given I am not only reverting to my teens and the *Warlord of Mars*, I am swept back to Babylon and an Oriental despot named Hammurabi. What the *Manifesto* is calling a libertarian society was existent at that time, some 3800 years ago. There were no police. They were invented in the 19th century by Sir Robert Peel in Britain.

Hammurabi, as it turned out, had a kind of restitution/restoration agency. Historians have generally agreed that it could be termed the principle of "an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth."

While the *Manifesto* invites us to travel both backwards and forwards in time, the result that I see takes us backward to Babylon and there we are beached. We will not only have "an eye for any eye; a tooth for a tooth." We will have liver for liver; spleen for spleen, a kidney, heart or gall bladder for its counterpart.

Unless I am grossly incapable of understanding the words employed, I see here a chamber of horrors so brutal and heinous that by comparison Torquemada's rack and thumbscrew become a taffy pull and manicure.

But let me set the sadism aside for a moment and consider the consequences of such a system. Given this concept as a *modus vivendi* millions of people will wish to become victims! Crimes can be staged which haven't occurred. Incriminating evidence can be planted. Indeed, I can envision schools conducted by various Fagins engaged in encouraging the perpetration of pseudo aggression.

The possibilities are endless. What a marvelous way of bringing an enemy to ruin. Accuse him of having imposed an injury upon you. Take care that you purchase a few witnesses and plant a bit of evidence, and you have a profitable business. Indeed, like the criminal class in Egypt, you can permit yourself to be maimed and made grotesque. It insures generous alms and a good living.

We are now back to Shakespeare and the Merchant of Venice. After all, the request of Shylock was the fulfillment of his bond. And this would be warranted in what the *Manifesto* calls a "libertarian" system. In this strange system, Antonio will die under the knife, and the blood shed, although not mentioned in the bond, will constitute "profit" to the victim; that marginal deterrent.

To offset this, the *Manifesto* and its supporters will have to write a series of elaborate laws which identify, define and specify a pretended crime as a crime in itself. Excluding semantics, what makes such a procedure different from that of every state in existence?

If such a procedure is not followed, then we will have each insurance company engaged in filling each contract with fine print as to what is and what is not a crime, as set forth by the directors of that company. I see small merit in competition toward brutality.

Indeed, this has been the bane of nearly ever effort made by alleged Anarchists, of whom I have knowledge. They decry the state. They vilify the state. They excoriate it. It will be abolished. And in place of it they tell us we will have a system in which precisely the same remedies are sought by processes which include the use of violence and the violation of men's minds, bodies and property. But we won't call it a state! It will be an Insurance Company. Or a Protection Company. Or a Restoration, Restitution Retaliation Ragout.

Alas, there is still more.

I am told (page 10, para. 3), "Only at this point, when the matter has been

fully *contested, investigated and judged*, and still B (the aggressor) refuses to relinquish the stolen property, would violence occur."

If we take a look at the real world, we will discover that if B (the aggressor) doesn't wish to be a contestant and refuses to be investigated, coercion must be employed long before judgment is rendered. If B will not permit entry into his home, where the victim alleges he has seen his stolen property, then, to verify the allegation, force must be used to win B's compliance. But what if, *in fact*, B is guilty of nothing except that he looks like the aggressor, or that what was allegedly stolen had a duplicate which B has honestly acquired? Then we find an innocent person, seeking to maintain his privacy and go about his business peacefully, victimized by an investigative company merely to please the wishes of A, who, in fact, may not even have experienced an act of theft but wishes to destroy the credibility of B.

The true nature of B cannot be determined prior to an investigation. And a contest, and a judgment. But these things cannot be obtained without coercion, if B is unwilling. The guilty conceivably would always be unwilling. But many who are innocent would likewise be unwilling. Or will willingness be law?

The suggestion is made that we can have prison camps for the recalcitrant (but not prisons) and that here and there we can always kill the person who has, (it is alleged) himself, performed some act of killing.

Isn't this a clear case of asking the ends to justify the means? It appears so, at which point we have waved goodbye to consistency.

I find it difficult to come up with a dollar scale by means of which to set a price on life, consent to intimacy and non-kidnapping.

Indeed, and for reasons Konkin has set forth, I find it difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a dollar value even for stolen property. A single dollar has a different value to different people, depending on their relative scales of value, for dollars, goods and services.

Thus, as Konkin correctly shows, value judgments enter in and restitution and restoration must be *arbitrarily* imposed as a deterrent. Indeed, this appears to be the primary rationale for asking for *more* than a mere restoration or restitution. Since it would be impossible to arrive at a condition identical to that which preceded the crime, then error will be made but it must be made on behalf of the victim.

This insistence of establishing property rights over the perpetrator of a crime appears to overlook the fact that on occasion, a crime may be committed because of dire financial conditions. Such conditions will *always* manifest in any world of limited resources and imperfect human beings. While the "old left" attempted to make it appear that *all* crime arose from poverty (absurd on its face) the fact remains that some crimes have always been caused by privation. If a person is starving he will very possibly steal, even if he has to inflict physical injury on an innocent bystander in process.

I do not condone theft because of this fact. Any act of theft is a wrongful act, regardless of motivation. But I see nothing within the *Manifesto* which takes such a possibility into consideration. The criminal is a criminal; the victim is a victim. A rose, is a rose, is a rose.

Konkin has been both generous and gracious in the *Manifesto* concerning my own position for which I thank him. Further, he is at least partly correct in

stating (footnote, page 7) "LeFevre's pacifism also dilutes the attraction of his libertarian tactics, probably far more than deserved."

That my position tends to turn away many is confirmed. That I deserve better is a moot point.

But I have never taken a position with the view to making it popular. Every statement I have made I have tried to make consistent with truth and with the fundamental definition of human liberty. I have not called for a following. I have found my own way and would not deprive a single person of the joy he can experience by finding his.

Konkin is correct when he observes in the same footnote that: "He (LeFevre) holds back from describing a complete strategy resulting from these personal tactics, partially due to a fear of being charged with *prescribing* as well as *describing*."

The strategy which I have repeatedly set forth does not and will not appear to be a strategy for those who insist on group action. They can conceive of no strategy deserving of the name until people are somehow welded into a group.

The strategy I have offered goes hand in hand with the tactics I also recommend. It is the same one-on-one procedure which assists each individual in removing himself without violence from the cloying, clutching tentacles of all states. While admittedly it cannot be done either instantly nor perfectly, it can be achieved by those who wish to achieve it. I make no apology for its imperfections. Agoric enterprises aren't perfect either, and never will be. Humanity does not produce perfect specimens.

Finally, I come to what I view as a second inconsistency in the *Manifesto*. Encouraged by the author's invitation, let me point to it.

In passing through the various phases which Konkin's imagination has portrayed, we come at last to the transition between phase 3 and 4. Konkin sees this period as inevitably violent, in total betrayal of the very principles he claims to espouse.

"Revolution is as inevitable as any human action can be," is Konkin's footnote assertion. So, in the end, regardless of peaceful means, we must throw out the Agoric principles of self-fulfillment and kill the statists as the only way to a free society.

Konkin acknowledges that there are arguments against this view. Personally, I believe it is Konkin's philosophic origin in left-of-center areas which causes him to cling to this position.

The primary reasons I should like to offer which in my view significantly alter the "inevitability" he sees, relate to the method he uses of advancing Agoric causes, and the nature of capitalism in all forms including the Agoric.

By employing the one-on-one educational method, the gradual resurgence of free enterprise will advance only as rapidly as our ability to educate makes it possible. Thus, free market principles are never imposed, they are learned and proven by those who learn and practice.

An uninhibited market place is far more profitable and comfortable than an inhibited marketplace. The assertion that "Statists" will adhere to statism

neglects the reality of a major characteristic of all Statists.

They, too, seek profit. They seek applause, recognition and comfort. As the Agoric principles unfold and enlarge by the adding of dedicated practitioners, moving in that direction becomes expedient. All statists are given to expedience and seek the high ground. There will be a natural tendency for the most ambitious and most capable statists to move in that direction.

To be successful in any kind of free market, Agoric or conventional, capital investments must be made. No one with capital invested can afford the risks to capital destruction and divestiture entailed in war. And in this context take note: All wars are state-inspired. But they are invariably directed against *another state*, not against the politicians of the local state. Politicians don't *wage* war. They *make* the war by encouraging conflict which keeps them out of harm's way. Part of the politician's "capital" is the sanction he has obtained from his own countrymen, and part consists of his pose of super-intelligence which must be protected by the sacrifice of others. He will risk more by violent conflict than by moving in the direction of free enterprise.

I am delighted to see the Konkin Manifesto and can applaud it *in general* for its position respecting consistency, objective and method. My objections, if understood, may heighten its impact. I believe it will have and deserves to have a compelling influence upon members of the "old" left. Here its syntax and its sometimes purple passages may well be pivotal in any number of instances. I wish it and its author well.

Robert LeFevre, October 1980

Reply to LeFevre by S.E. Konkin III

In one sense, there is little to say to Robert LeFevre's reply to the *New Libertarian Manifesto*. His position and potential response was put forward in *NLM*, as he himself observes accurately, and he responded pretty much as predicted. Our area of agreement and disagreement remains the same.

LeFevrians are welcome in a New Libertarian society; the converse may not be true but since they have, if consistent, prevented themselves from doing anything about us, we can live together. Of course, the LeFevrians need fear nothing from New Libertarians; what will excite their righteous indignation, ire and possible shunning is that we will defend ourselves against aggressors. Since the pure LeFevrians will never be aggressors, they will wax wroth over the injuries or possible injuries of murderers, thieves, burglars and rapists—with the heroic self-defenders being the object of their wrath. Their stingless buzzing, I hasten to add; their biteless bark.

LeFevre has done more to increase our ranks than any individual other than Murray Rothbard. It is truly instructive in the diversity of the Movement of Libertarians to see the total *orthogonality* of his critique of *NLM* compared to Rothbard's. The two views are perpendicular with no overlap. LeFevre accepts what Rothbard rejects and *vice versa*, although there is an area in the later, advanced section that both are, expectedly, unsure of.

Although LeFevre has radicalized and galvanized hundreds of thousands of libertarians, a clear majority of them remain detached from his pacifism, even though it is his core, and absorb the outer layers of his ideology—which turn out to be very pure libertarianism. His presentation is superb, due to his will, skill, and actor's training.

One characteristic about LeFevre's position often neglected is all the innovations he's introduced to the philosophy. The pacifist principle drives him to find the most ingenious methods to accomplish protection, defense and evasion of aggression. A few of the best of his followers or students who remain true to his basic position—Richard Radford, Caroline Roper-Deyo, Linda Abrams, Sy & Riqui Leon and Harry Browne come readily to mind—show the same ingenuity and innovative tendency. We self-defending libertarians can put up with an awful lot of annoyance at being hectored about our violent tendencies or rhetoric for the value of the product of that pacifist-motivated research. The less to be spent on the overhead of self-defense, the better; could anything be closer to a "universal good?"

Given all that, LeFevre deserves to be answered. In fact, to not directly answer his attacks—as many libertarian theorists choose—is a form of condescension he certainly does not deserve. Frankly, I think his position is wrong and obstinately so, given all the evidence he's had to face. But there's nothing ignoble or demeaning about it.

Putting the pacifism principle in one's mind seems to have the effect of ingesting a psychoactive drug. Flashes of brilliant insight and otherwise inconceivable innovation and invention result, but mostly what comes out is a distorted view of reality. Everything is warped to the "straight" observer though it makes perfect sense to the psychonaut. Yet, with time and observations, the internal logic to the warp is discernible to the observer.

Passing over the mutual appreciation section of LeFevre's reply—and we do concur in much—one comes to the criticism. Of course it is assumed that one has read the *New Libertarian Manifesto* before reading this, but even so, a translation of LeFevre's "warp factor" may help no end.

First, as far as lecturing libertarians on integrity and making sure they know I'm not telling them to break natural law, I do not believe a *libertarian* could possibly read *NLM* and think otherwise. Perhaps some non-libertarian might see such a call to indiscriminate "law-breaking," but I'm clearly not the one to reach those with such lack of reasoning ability. Perhaps we need anarcho-therapists for those whose brains have been turned to jelly by overdoses of statism? And while I may have been burned as often as LeFevre in market transactions with alleged libertarians, I have prepared appropriate "White Lists" of untrustworthy types for sale. As whitelisting is developed by the counter-economy, the rip-off rate should rapidly fall. I consider the burns I've experienced to be start-up costs of the agora.

LeFevre's point about legal action being out of the question after a black-market burn has a strange ring. Surely *legal action is out of the question for LeFevrians* in any market, white, grey or black. In fact, even though not LeFevrians in general, New Libertarians urge defensive and restorative

remedies entirely outside the State's legal system *in all circumstances*. No one could possibly threaten you with as much aggression as the State; calling on the State to eliminate a mugger is like calling Satan to exorcise an imp.

Our parting of the ways begins where LeFevre sees "good laws" on the books of the State—and that ties in with his later claim that agorists would need a legal system to enforce restoration of property. What he seems to fail to perceive in New Libertarians and most other anarchist libertarians is that we object to the *nationalization* of the "business of justice" by the State. There are *no* laws that the State could have in common with a market agency because the former must *legislate* with *statist execution* written in the law. Market restorers and protectors will follow Natural Law, which is discovered like any phenomenon in nature by observation and the *natural* response—or optimal one among many—applied.

Moving onward, we find a paean to self-discipline: hear, hear.

Now when LeFevre challenges me on consistency, he does strike to the quick. He claims that I accept the right to one's life and property and then deny it to an aggressor. But if I yielded up the property of the victim to the aggressor—when I could restore it—*then* I would be violating my consistency. As far as I am concerned, the aggressor has opened the boundary of his property (not just "land" property we're talking about) and opened a passage up to the stolen property *which is not within his boundary ever* which I reseal after regaining the missing item(s).

The aggressor has voluntarily chosen to open that path. The victim has agreed to nothing. Should the victim neglect any retrieval of her or his goods, I have the right delegated to do so. The sanction of the aggressor is given to the victim the moment the attack is initiated by the will of the aggressor.

LeFevre chooses to look at the world from the irrational eyes of the aggressor who wishes to initiate his action and be free of its consequences. I have no intention of faking reality for the violence-initiators. Perhaps he can evade apprehension for his theft or blow as one who jumps a cliff can be wafted away on a strong updraft; but the natural consequences of gravity is falling to one's death and the natural consequence of invasion is restoration.

To make it perfectly clear where LeFevre and I differ, I see no rights of the aggressor being violated by restorative action. If one beats one's fist against a rock and bleeds, is one's rights violated? The same natural law applies to striking those who can and do defend themselves successfully.

No privilege is established. No feudalism—whose prime characteristic was preventing the serf from defending himself against the lord's plunder through quasi-religious mystification of the power relations—exists. Nor has the "criminal" lost his *rights* nor do I make it appear thus—the "criminal" merely has failed to gain any "rights"—unearned privileges—over the victim.

Nor is this the "argument of the statist." The argument of the Statist has ever been to disarm those who would defend themselves. Substituting themselves (the statists) as defenders is only one ploy used and secondary. There have been many anarchist who have denounced pacifists as counter-revolutionary precisely because they objectively serve the State at that point. Since New Libertarians consider non-aggression primary and fighting the State secondary, we accept pacifists as some-time allies. But should it ever happen that a LeFevrian actually talks anarchists from eliminating the State when they could.

he will receive anything but my gratitude and can live with all the slaughter and plunder which continues.

The State does *not* say that restitution and restoration is a *moral imperative*. The State—everywhere, in all forms—rejects restoration for punishment, “rehabilitation” *i.e.* thought control, and execution. Anything but restoration is acceptable to the State.

And as we move along, we find horror on LeFevre’s part over the aggressor’s possibly losing an organ if technology could use it to restore a victim. My heart bleeds for the crippled and dying victims, and not the obscenity of a hale and hearty thug standing over his victim with the ability to restore him or her. I would swallow my normal aversion to biological lab practices and gleefully wield the scalpel’s first stroke! LeFevre can live with himself and the dying victim’s gasps if he would not do so.

Hammurabi did *not* have anything approaching a restitution/restoration agency; he had it’s frustrator and enemy, the State.

So far, then, we deal with different world-views based on defence *vs* pacifism. The debate is stimulating and fair. But then LeFevre *seems* to dump the Marquis of Queensbury. What he sneaks in is the problem of error, of misinterpretation of evidence and being deliberately misled. My response is *tu quoque!* Suppose LeFevre is blowing up stumps on his farm and was led to believe no one was near the stump—perhaps quite reasonably. Perhaps someone parachuted down in the seemingly safe field and *boom!* LeFevre discovers the mangled remains.

And what if someone wants to get rid of an enemy and leads them to the next stump to go, then rushes to assure LeFevre that all is clear?

Why should I feel any more problem with errors in restoration then he sees in any other problems in living? And why should he then bring it up? Surely we will always do our best to act safely. The world is constructed such that human action will always contain the *risk* of accidental violence done to another. In the agorist world, prompt restoration would be the best indicator of accidental nature.

No series of elaborate laws need be written. Natural Law seems blazingly obvious and simple to me and most disputants for thousands of years—lawyers, LeFevre and David Friedman notwithstanding.

Asking the ends to justify the means is, by every definition I know, what consistency means. The only other possibility is having ends and means *inconsistent*. Nor *must* restoration and restitution be *arbitrarily* imposed; I *oppose* precisely that in Chapter Two at some length, showing how the market can be used to establish a value. I also explicitly oppose any imposition of fines or anything else for deterrent value over what deterrent is naturally in full restitution costs (including interest and apprehension). Hardly cricket of LeFevre to suggest I did otherwise.

And to close off this area finally, New Libertarians have no “insistence of establishing property rights over the perpetrator of the crime” as LeFevre would have it. In fact, again, the *New Libertarian Manifesto* insists on the *opposite*—no property rights over any individual ever. Only that which the victim already has rights is to be restored. But no less than her or his rightful property—all of it. Let LeFevre answer a moral charge for a change: what gives him the right to yield up another’s property *right*, especially to the one who deserves it least?

It is fairly clear from my previous statements and articles and accolades for LeFevre that I have no quarrel with *his* strategy. In fact, as a *tactic* I endorse and practice it fully with the highest success of any tactic. I urge other New Libertarians to sell others "one-on-one" if they have any talent for salesmanship. But without a *strategy* in the package they're offering to sell in this tactical maneuver, there are a lot fewer customers. Here, Rothbard is right.

LeFevre's hold on reality—or at least the world I thought we shared—gets pretty tenuous near the end. Crimes are never *caused* by privation. They are *caused* by the will—and wilfulness—of an acting individual. Period. Including the crime of statism. Why should my seeing the **Phase 3** to **Phase 4** transition involving violent revolution "betray" any of *my* principles when I make it blindingly clear that it is the *State* which will initiate the violence without fail. If I am to take no action which defends myself I may be a brave pacifist; but if I flee from the right path because I am threatened with violence then I am simply a coward. Surely LeFevre would not have me shrink from the agorist society's fulfillment because *others* threaten violence? I am not responsible for what they in their compulsive evil do—regardless of how predictable I find it.

Finally, I have no origin in left-of-center areas having followed a similar path to LeFevre's to libertarianism from right-wing statism.

Perhaps he refers to my greater familiarity with State-Leftist argument through broader reading? I urge him to widen his background similarly.

I see no threat of imposition of free-market principles; the act is self-contradictory.

And I'm glad the LeFevre can read the minds of hard-core statist better than I because we can certainly use his telepathic powers to gather intelligence from the enemy camp. Nonetheless, LeFevre's idea about the State making war only against other States is quickly tossed in history's ample dustbin: what of the conquests by imperialist states of anarchies in Ireland, Iceland, and Iboland? What of the countless crushings of internal insurrections in every state's history including *this one* from 1790's Whiskey Rebellion to 1860's Civil War to 1960's Days of Rage?

All said and done, this brief reply really is exhaustive of LeFevre's ideological flaws. Fortified with the knowledge what to filter from his generally superb body of original libertarian work, the student of libertarianism should feel free to dive deeply into the heady waters of uncut, pure LeFevrian thought.

Perhaps the greatest compliment I can return him is to conclude that after the *New Libertarian Manifesto* weathers a frontal assault by LeFevre—and a full flank one by Rothbard—it will withstand any lesser sortie. —**Samuel Edward Konkin**

EDITOR'S NOTES: Kerry Thornley submitted an article peripheral to the concerns of the *New Libertarian Manifesto* for inclusion in *Strategy of the New Libertarian Alliance* but was bumped through lack of space. It should see print in the next issue of *New Libertarian* magazine (#10). Kenneth R. Gregg of Rampart Institute's submission may enjoy suffer a similar fate.

ART DIRECTOR, proofreader and layout man: VICTOR ROMAN

The New Altruism: A Critique of the New Libertarian Manifesto

by Erwin S. (Filthy Pierre) Strauss

I have little quarrel with the basic vision of society presented in your *New Libertarian Manifesto*: "an advanced counter-economic system (approaching) the free society" (note on page 7). I also agree that the "free society" itself would be unstable for the reasons you give in paragraph 2 on page 8. However, as pro-agoric activity broadens from individual actions, business enterprises, etc., towards the explicit pursuit of grand strategy through a continental "Movement," a problem arises. At some point, the link between what an individual puts into the activity (in terms of scarce resources, such as labor or money) and what the individual can expect to get out (in terms of increased freedom) begins to break down. The broader "Movement" activities deal in increasingly public goods. The benefits of "an advanced counter-economic system as it nears the free society" will be enjoyed just as much by those who did not contribute scarce resources towards its achievement as by those who did. Therefore, it is difficult to rationally justify making such a contribution, which would involve incurring a significant cost in exchange for (at best) a microscopic increase in the expected value to oneself of a good (increased freedom) to be received in the future.

It seems to me that the people likely to contribute to such a "Movement" will be those motivated by altruism. That is, they will be those who are interested in living their lives for the sake of others. In other words, they will be those people who are prepared to set the costs incurred by themselves off against the benefits conferred on other people, as if those benefits had been conferred on themselves. This is a good economic definition of altruism.

Now, I myself am not categorically opposed to altruism. I recognize that the genes and/or deep cultural values embodied in me evolved in certain contexts. These contexts selected for genes and/or values that gratified their bearer for seeking certain goals. These goals include such things as eating sweet foods, copulating with members of the opposite sex—and advancing the interests of other bearers of the same genes and/or values (i.e., altruism). I recognize that these goals may, in general, be at cross-purposes with my rational self-interest in the present context. Nevertheless, up to a point, the most efficacious policy for me may be to appease those values, if this can be done at reasonable cost. However, as the scarce resources devoted to such appeasement increase, there comes a point where further appeasement of those values constitutes paying an excessive price for ephemeral psychological values. At that point, it's time to stop such indulgences and get down to work pursuing more substantial goals.

However, I am categorically opposed to logical contradiction. You set yourself up as categorically opposed to altruism (e.g., in "Our Enemy, The Party," you call it immorality—though it would be personal immorality, rather than the social immorality you group it with, as long as it involves no coercion). But in the *Manifesto*, you say you count yourself among those "who burn for Liberty, and wish to devote themselves to that life's work" (page 22). But Liberty does not

exist in the abstract; it is enjoyed by specific people. The set of those people for whose Liberty you burn either contains nobody besides yourself, or it contains other people. If the former, then your earlier statement on page 22 applies: "For those who wish only to live their lives as free as possible, . . . counter-economic libertarianism is sufficient. No more is needed." But you want more. Therefore, you must burn for a Liberty to be enjoyed by others. In other words, you are prepared to expend your scarce resources to secure a value for others. This is our basic definition of altruism again.

The appeal to altruism is also prominent in the pitches on your Movement of the Libertarian Left coupons. In "Our Enemy, The Party," you welcome "donations of encouragement," and ask me to "express my approval of your work" through financial contribution. In the *Manifesto*, you ask people to "express material support for M.L. Action!" All of these refer to gifts to M.L. over and above the membership fee, with nothing to be delivered by M.L. in return.

A similar altruistic tone emerges from much of your *oeuvre*. All this creates a problem of inconsistency of means and ends. A Movement supported by altruistic means is unlikely to consistently seek a libertarian society. In fact, lacking the guide of profit, the supporters of such a Movement are unlikely to consistently pursue *any* long-term goal. Historically, such Movements gravitate towards the ringing Manifesto, the stirring rally, and other forms of action that provide immediate emotional gratification—rather than to forms of action that lead to substantial long-term change. Your activities over the past decade or so seem to have run along these lines.

Of the views you discuss, my own come closest to those you cite in the note on page 7 for Harry Browne—and, of course, the ones for the *Libertarian Connection* (8 issues [1 year] \$10; sample \$1; from me at 9850 Fairfax Square #232, Fairfax, VA 22031; each subscriber may, but needn't, contribute up to four pages per issue to be printed unedited). However, Browne goes overboard in denouncing cooperative action, taking a borscht-belt comic's view of human nature: every wife is a nagging shrew, every business partner is a larcenous leech, *etc.* Cooperative action can be very advantageous if one picks the co-participants prudently, and defines the relationship carefully. The fact that Browne offers "no overall strategy" for social change is no more a valid criticism than is a Christian's complaint that atheism offers no afterlife, or a statist's complaint that anarchism offers no benevolent state. The issue isn't offering such things, of course, but delivering them. I've summarized above why I don't think pursuit of your grand strategy will deliver a libertarian society—and even more why it isn't an efficacious use of most people's scarce resources.

The process of "outflanking the state with technology," as you summarize the *Connection* position, isn't a prescription to sit back and wait for this outflanking to happen. Rather, it suggests counter-economic courses of action that might be followed to profit during and after the decline of the state—and, incidentally, to hasten that decline. Your unsupported invocation of the "ingenuity" of the statists to confound these approaches seems defeatist to me. It will take an awful lot of ingenuity, for example, to prevent the spread of weapons of mass

destruction. The result of that spread will hardly be pure libertarianism, but it almost certainly will sound the death knell for the state as we know it—if the State doesn't succumb before then.

—Erwin S. "Filthy Pierre" Strauss

March 1981

Reply to Filthy Pierre by S.E. Konkin

While the third pole of libertarianism as represented by the *Libertarian Connection* may not have been around as long as Rothbard and LeFevre, to one who entered the Movement during the Great Conversion of 1969 as I did, the three *Connection* stars—"Skye D'Aureous," "Natalee Hall" and "Filthy Pierre"—were almost as established and respected a view. To an extent the *Connection* position differs from both and is clearly independent; also, *Connectors* are usually more future-oriented, heavily into technology and market innovations. In fact, if Rothbard seeks to revolutionize us to Liberty and LeFevre to pacify us there—crude simplifications to be sure—*Connectors* want to innovate us there. Since "Skye" and "Natalee" have gone on to do superb work in that area under their real names, Filthy Pierre has become editor of the libertarian APA and the closest to a standard-bearer and spokesperson that the ultra-individualist *Connection* viewpoint has.

To begin with, I'm proud to have Pierre's basic agreement with the New Libertarian "vision." While I have been little influenced *directly* by the *Connection* and its contributors, having read only one issue before he became editor (which was after *NLM's* publication), some of their better ideas have undoubtedly filtered into general movement lore and I most gratefully acknowledge any which inspired *New Libertarian* and *New Libertarian Manifesto's* more original and innovative presentations of the libertarian case. So let's check out our few differences.

Pierre is vigilant against the Libertarian Movement re-collectivizing into a potential State. Hear, hear; he is welcome to be a permanent paid watchdog in the pages of *New Libertarian*, *SNLA* or wherever. I too fear such a possible occurrence and see it already happening in the guise of the LP.

But I am afraid he sees altruism where none was intended, and, I submit, none is present. Discarding one side issue, I consider "public goods" a problem for Chicago economists to dwell on—like theologians counting angels on pins.

Pierre does proffer the very service I was looking for in requesting critiques. He discovered an area that not only was unclear in expressing but which I had not yet realized was a problem. My thanks to his contribution to the clarity of the cause.

What I did make clear is that there is personal freedom and freedom for a society at large—including oneself. Pierre's comment on Browne—with which I almost totally agree!—confirms that. What I failed to make clear is that making *society* freer has *immediate* rewards in lowering risk. Thus, one judges how much a contribution to agorist activity reduces one's counter-economic risks and

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