

Freedom Matters

A Weekly Newsletter

Dane County, Wisconsin

Vol. 1, No. 13

Monday, December 3, 2001

We are a free people in a republic, under a constitution which limits the powers of government to those necessary to secure the unalienable rights of each person to their life, liberty and property. Yet, when a legislature is in session, no one's life, liberty or property is safe. It's the curse of a democracy. That's why we have a republic instead. *Freedom Matters* dedicates itself to the fight to restore our republic. Most of the press and courts fail to do so. They've forgotten that freedom matters.

Legalized Plunder & the Modern State A Brief Review of Bastiat's "The Law"

by Bob Bowman

Item: California lottery officials admitted in court that they sold millions of dollars in scratch-off lottery tickets after the top prizes had already been claimed. They said they did nothing wrong because state law exempts them from false-advertising laws.

Item: John and Peter meet Paul, who is homeless and in need. John pulls \$20 from his pocket and gives it to Paul. That's charity. Suppose he pulls \$20 from Peter's pocket to give to Paul. That's theft.

Political Economics: The government that robs Peter to pay Paul can count on the support of Paul.

The first item is a real news story, the second, a parable. Both illustrate the demise of morality when the state itself violates property. Political economics tells us why the state comes to violate property.

So what is the law? Fred Bastiat, a Frenchman writing in 1850, produced the simplest, clearest, most brilliant explanation in his little book *The Law*. I quote from an English translation of it by Dean Russell, © 1998 by The Foundation for Economic Education.

Bastiat takes as his basic premise that each person has the right to defend against the depredations of others. Thus, each person may defend their own life, liberty and property. Law and Government develop as a collective means of defense of those rights.

Government, as the collective of individuals, has the same moral right as each individual. Therefore, since it is wrong for Paul to rob from Peter, it is wrong for the government to rob Peter to pay Paul.

When the state violates property, Bastiat notes that it tends to destroy society. He points to the United States (in 1850) where the Law had kept to its proper bounds except on two issues: slavery and tariffs. On those two, it was engaged in legalized theft. He predicted that those two issues might destroy the Union. Ten years later, the U.S.A. was plunged into its civil war over those two issues. The north won. It preserved its protective tariffs and abolished slavery.

The law is perverted, says Bastiat, if the state takes from Peter to give to Paul. That's legalized theft. Why

does the state do it? It seems people want something for nothing. How to avoid it? As with illegal theft, make legal theft more costly than work.

Even in Bastiat's day, such legal theft had many names, on which I quote him: "tariffs, protection, benefits, subsidies, encouragements, progressive taxation, public schools, guaranteed jobs, guaranteed profits, minimum wages, a right to relief, a right to the tools of labor, free credit, and so on and so on. All these plans as a whole—with their common aim of legal plunder—constitute socialism."

That was a Frenchman writing in 1850. Gosh. The more things change, the more they stay the same; you will recognize many icons of the modern world in that list. Morally, to Bastiat, they are all based on theft, no matter it is legal theft.

Bastiat notes three choices re legal theft:

1. The few steal from the many.
2. Everybody steals from everybody.
3. Nobody steals from anybody.

Only #3 works, he says. History agrees.

Bastiat's warning is coming true. The corruption of politics created the income tax (state slavery). Then the great depression led to a power vacuum in which Franklin Roosevelt declared that citizens had a right to "freedom from want" and foisted on us the most dangerous entitlement ever (social security). It is a Ponzi scheme, illegal to all except the state, which has become a massive tax trap, sucking up the fruits of our labors and deceiving us into lifestyles of dependency. Because of the aging of America, the ratio of workers contributing to retirees drawing social security continues to fall, and our Ponzi pyramid is fast approaching its collapse. Argentina's riots of today warn us of the riots that will sweep America then.

Why does a government based on legal theft lead a nation to ruin? Because it divorces our actions from their rightful consequences. If we can no longer keep the fruits of our labor, we no longer labor. If we can legally steal from others, we no longer labor. The United States is dangerously close to crossing the threshold where our labor will fall below that necessary to maintain our prosperity. The morality of our courts has already crossed that threshold; they fail to protect our inalienable constitutional rights.

Readers' Bulletin Board. e-mail us your comments. Include your name, for publication by *Freedom Matters*

*** Published by Freedom Matters, Inc., Cross Plains, WI. 53528. Michael Byrne, Editor***
To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail to rebshar@chorus.net, or call call Bob at (608) 831-6653.
Our e-mail subscriber list is confidential. We will not sell it or reveal it.

Back Issues of Freedom Matters are available on request, as e-mail.