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**ROTHBARD** in *New Libertarian Notes?* \*Awed Hush\* All this time we never said an unkind word about him, and...nothing. But we let Howie sound a little critical of him last issue, and...Hmmm. "Hey, God, I don't like the way you're running things down here. (Make sure and double space those stone tablets this time.)" *Thrusts and Parries*: Marquand says Nix to the Left, and Red Jose dumps on the Right. Goldfield lays into Our Dear Abby (whoops, better rephrase that; sounds a trifle sexist), I mean calls her to task (Nope), how about, puts her in her...well, she has her say in her own Way. Rising from *Reason* through a *Renaissance*, John J. Pierce makes the cover of *NLN* and conversation with Neil. George Knox, El Reno inmate, can actually imagine a worse confinement...and does. Caulfield unleashes a horde of liberated kids, Tony Warnock a few quanta of energy, Tom Avery a bit of venom, John Harlee Singing Destroyers, and Dave Rosinger an off-key (and yes, offensive to Richard Friedmans) dirge.

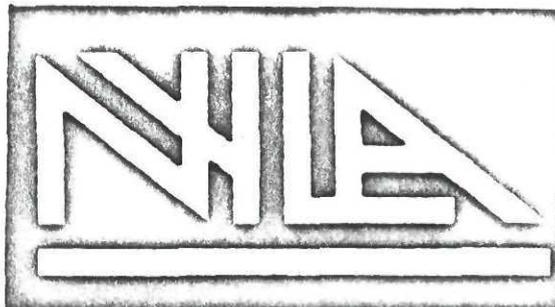
IN THE NEXT ISSUE

Richard Friedman reviews *Time Enough for Love: The Lives of Lazarus Long* by Robert A. Heinlein, and sizzling off the press. Neil Schulman taped an **exclusive** (No, Neil, I didn't forget to mention it.) interview with Robert LeFevre, the man who unleashed the hell-hounds of Peace into the Libertarian Movement. Howie Katz floats down the currency stream on an Exchange Rate, and our Edifying, Enlightening Editrix will educate us on Tax Resistance. No, Nixon, natters Nona. More, you say? You asked for it. Hold on to your jerkins, 'cause The Free Marketeers *Ride Again*. Heh, heh, heh,...

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# Murray N. Rothbard

## *Libertarian Strategy: Reply to Mr. Katz*

Howard Katz performs the neat trick of simultaneously accusing me of being too right-wing (now) and too left-wing (before) (*NLN*, April). Before turning to the more important matter of basic strategic theory, let us clean up the specifics.

First, on consistency. Mr. Katz trumpets his own consistency on the issues (presumably, in contrast to my own positions). Yet, on most of his specifics I too was consistent, and in the same way, then and now; I too opposed fair housing laws *and* the persecution of the gypsy cab driver; the Wagner Act *and* price-wage controls, etc. I differ with him on the "coddling criminals" of the Warren Court (then *and* now) because most of the Court's decisions in this area were supremely libertarian. My view, then and now, is that the *accused should* be "coddled" (i.e. allowed the full rights of the innocent), and such decisions as *Miranda* did precisely that. I am against preventive detention for the same reason. I believe, then and now, that the people who *shouldn't* be "coddled" are *convicted* criminals.

Secondly, I continue to differ with Mr. Katz on his estimate of the New Left. I don't think it can be dismissed simply as a "vicious anti-libertarian movement." The New Left was a mixed movement, and the mix changed very rapidly in the short period of its existence (for a couple of years it was predominantly anarchist). Overweighting its libertarian elements is scarcely the same as saying that it had no such elements at all; and much of the overweighting was due to the difficulty of keeping up with its rapid changes. Furthermore, while the New Left

was scarcely a supporter of property rights, Mr. Katz's examples betray a typical conservative confusion about property rights themselves; for People's Park was the property of a *state* university and Columbia's large income from the Federal government meant that it was scarcely private in any meaningful sense of that term. Not only that: but the revolt at Columbia focused on the illegitimacy of (a) its funds from the federal government, and (b) its use of local government coercion to seize property in a public park. Mr. Katz's confusion reveals once again the apparent inability of our "limited government" libertarians to distinguish sharply between public and private, and to recognize the illegitimacy of any government property, even in those functions (e.g. education) which they would concede to be illegitimate *in the abstract*.

But the main point about the New Left is that Mr. Katz tends to ignore its major thrust, which was libertarian: fierce opposition to the draft and to the Vietnam War. I contend that these were the major political issues of the late 60's, both for the libertarian and for the country as a whole, and that therefore a (strictly tactical) alliance with the New Left was very much in order. I don't know *which* New Leftists Mr. Katz means when he says that they favored national service; the ones I knew and read were against the draft, lock, stock, and barrel.

This brings me to the vital questions of strategic theory. There are two crucial points to be made. One is that the major political issues have changed since the late

60's. Then the vital issues were the interrelated draft and Vietnam War. Both, if not totally gone, have, praise be, faded away, and presumably will not be critical issues in the 70's. I judge that these critical issues will be (a) economic (taxes, inflation, welfare, etc.), and (b) "social" (crime, coerced integration of housing and schools, etc.). On both these issues we largely agree with Middle America, and hence the major point of my proposed "Middle America orientation" for the coming historical period. Mr. Katz may ridicule these changes in orientation as "Sad Sackism," but the point is that, while libertarian theory remains consistent and unchanging, the major political *issues* change over different historical periods, and it would be strategic folly for us not to adjust our political focus accordingly.

But there is something even more important to be said about strategy. For Mr. Katz makes what I judge to be the crucial error of the Conservative: by locating the major threat to liberty in the "majority." Hence, his strategic advice to go always *against* the views of the majority in any historical period. Apart from his absurd error of thinking that the New Left was at any time "dominant" or constituted a majority, his concentration on the majority ("In a democracy it is the majority who has the power to violate rights") highlights the great gulf between his strategic viewpoint and my own. For I hold that at all times the great threat to liberty comes not from the majority *but from the State*; it is the State apparatus, the professional bureaucracy, politicians, and their highly-placed supporters, which at any and all times is the engine of despotism. Aside from an occasional lynching or street brawl, the majority of the public apathetically goes about its own business of everyday life. It is the State that is in the fulltime business of governing, i.e. of oppression. It is true that I look around for plausible allies in every historical period; but I do so in order to find allies *against the State*: to provide some sort of mass pressure from below so as to check, modify, or roll back State oppression.

It is *theoretically* possible for limited-government libertarians to have this "radical" view of the State, and to look upon the majority of the public as potential allies in the struggle against government. In fact, the *laissez-faire* radicals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the Cobdens and the Mills, and Mr. Katz's heroes the Jeffersonians and Jacksonians, *did* have precisely this view. And yet, for some reason, there are scarcely any of our limited archist friends today who have this radical perspective. Which means that converting limited archists to anarchism is not just a theoretical abstraction to be relevant at some distant date in the future, but of vital strategic importance for liberty here and now.