

Ideologically and personally, libertarians were soon to become isolated and stranded. Libertarians were either dying off or becoming co-opted into the pro-war New Right. Ever since the early 1950s, I had been privileged to work for a magnificent, now long-forgotten organization—the William Volker Fund—which single-handedly sought out, revived, and nurtured conservative and libertarian scholars, gave them grants to work on projects, organized conferences to meet with each

other and discuss common concerns, and, in 1960, published those scholarly books and collections of articles that were unable to find a publisher in an intellectual atmosphere dominated by left-liberalism.

I wrote *Man, Economy, and State and Power and Market* on a grant from the Volker Fund (as well as getting launched on *Ethics of Liberty*). Just on the brink of transferring its assets to endow a libertarian think-tank, the Volker Fund tragically collapsed in the winter of 1962, and the libertarian movement has never yet recovered from this terrible blow. For despite the strides made since, we have never attained the status of having a fully endowed libertarian think tank to sponsor, advance, and publish scholarship.

Some day the full story of the rise and fall of the Volker Fund should be told; suffice it to

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say that part of the collapse reflected the crisis in the broader movement: that is, the dramatic shift from Old Right to New, and the consequent sundering of the old, harmonious joint conservative-libertarian movement that had flourished from the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s.

As a full-time analyst for the Volker Fund, I was on the beach; one of the Volker stalwarts then secured me a multi-year grant for what became my four-volume *Conceived in Liberty*. After that, in the mid-1960s, I moved into academia.

Politically, the capture of the Republican Party in 1964 by the *National Review*-dominated Goldwater movement was for me (and for the remnant of Old Rightists such as Felix Morley) a nightmare, and I did the best I could within the embryonic libertarian movement to denounce the Goldwater movement as presenting a grave threat of nuclear war. I wrote an article blasting Goldwater for *The Innovator*, a California newsletter that served as one of the few libertarian periodicals at the time. I also spoke before a group of Chodorovian libertarian Georgists, who were philosophically opposed to voting and had not cast their ballots in years. What I accomplished was a fierce argument, with elderly Chodorovians brandishing their canes in my direction and declaiming: "Young man, I haven't voted in

thirty years, but after hearing you tonight I'm going out and voting for Barry Goldwater."

I was particularly concerned to set forth my views on a libertarian foreign policy, but there were then virtually no outlets for long libertarian articles. My theoretical defense of an isolationist foreign policy, "War, Peace, and the State," was published in 1963, in a short-lived University of Kansas libertarian student magazine, *The Standard*, and my sounding the alarm at the "Transformation of the American Right" could only be published in an obscure, now-forgotten pro-peace Catholic journal, *Continuum*.

Soon, however, conditions were to change, as the intensification of the Vietnam War led me to sound the call for an alliance with the emergent New Left on the war and the draft. The New Left phase of the modern libertarian movement was about to begin. (N.B: this is the second part of a multi-part article.) ●

## "Free-Market" Environmentalists

by M.N.R.

Free-market economists tend to scorn moral arguments, and to stick to strictly economic arguments in public policy. They contend that "moral arguments never convince anyone," whereas utilitarian, economic arguments are persuasive in converting others. And yet, no one has ever done an effective study of what sort of arguments convince or convert people, and there is certainly no evidence that moral arguments have no persuasive power. On the contrary, people

are being converted by moral arguments all the time.

Not only that: there is a great difference in the *intensity* of the typical convert on moral as against utilitarian grounds. The person convinced by an economic argument may well say: OK, you're right, and then go, unconcerned, about his business. Whereas the person convinced by a moral argument is apt to be swayed by passionate conviction, and dedicate himself to the cause. Moral convictions are therefore far more powerful and have a great deal more leverage than solely economic ones.

Some of the economists who tend to make such arguments are that strange breed known as "free-market environmentalists." These people, for example, have upbraided Lew Rockwell, now known far and wide as "Mr. Anti-Earth Day," for making moral and philosophical as well as strictly economic points against environmentalists. "You can never convince environmentalists that way," they say. "You must show them that the free market and private property can satisfy their goals (e.g. saving the turtle or the spotted owl) more efficiently than state action."

The problem is that environmentalists are not really interested in efficiency or preserving private property. This will be a shock to professional utilitarians, but environmentalists don't *have* the same goals as the rest of us. For all their blather about the importance of being nice to environmentalists and of avoiding moral critiques, our "free-market environmentalists," as one of them admitted to me ruefully the other day, have made almost no headway among other environmentalists. Their

vaunted programs are going down the tubes.

The reason is brutally simple. The environmentalists are prisoners and acolytes of a monstrous, literally anti-human philosophy. They despise and condemn the human race, which by its very nature and in contrast to other creatures, changes and transforms the environment instead of being passively subjected to it. Man is the blight of nature, the monster in the great chain of being. He must either be destroyed or drastically crippled. Palaver about cost-benefit analysis is not going to do any good; it will not convince environmentalists, and it misses the point. The point is not to convert the Jeremy Rifkins and the Ingrid Newkirks of the world; the point is to alert the bulk of sane humanity to the grave danger that these people present. The environmentalists must be seen as the enemy incarnate that they are.

Interestingly enough, one of the most prominent of these free-market environmentalist economists recently revealed the cloven hoof beneath his Mountain Man boots. Dr. John Baden, reporting on a speech I gave this spring at a Rockford Institute/Philadelphia Society meeting in Chicago, lamented that "during the week of Earth Day" (horrors! blasphemy!) I "not only disagreed with but scorned those who believe that elements of the environment have more than instrumental value." After dubbing me the "intellectual analog" to the "infamous" James Watt, Baden wonders how the classicists (whom he had mentioned in reporting on another session of the Society) "would deal with the problem of transcendent environmental values." (*Liberty*,

July, p. 22).

It's true that I believe Jim Watt got a raw deal. He was in favor of developing at least some natural resources for man's use instead of keeping them locked up forever in behalf of "the environment." As a result, he and several of his colleagues were mercilessly savaged by the powerful environmentalist lobby. But Watt and I are scarcely analogues, and one would think that Baden might be able to grasp this fact. After all, Watt was not in favor of privatizing the government's vast public domain, whereas I, of course, am all in favor of it. (I am opposed, however, to the Badenian policy of limiting resource ownership to private *environmentalist* groups.)

But the interesting point is that John Baden has now dropped the mask of amoral utilitarian economist, and has frankly revealed his true agenda: that he believes that the environment has "transcendental value," whereas I believe that it is only "instrumental" for man's use. OK. But then, of course, John Baden is frankly taking a moral-philosophical, and not simply a utilitarian, stand, and moreover it is a moral-philosophical stand that is simply mystical hooey. To say that trees are "transcendent" means that they have no limits, and I aver that they do indeed have limits and that they are easily delimitable. A tree is a tree is a tree, and besides, in the words of a great statesman, "once you've seen one tree, you've seen them all."

More and more I have come to the conclusion that the phrase "free-market environmentalist" is an oxymoron. Scratch one of them and you get...an environmentalist. ●