

The New Libertarian Creed

Recently a great deal of publicity has been given to a burgeoning split in the right wing, a split between the dominant Buckley-*National Review* conservatives and the new libertarians.

In their breakaway, the libertarians, who are strong on college campuses and generally among the youth, hark back to an older, almost forgotten tradition of individualism that characterized the right wing in the 1930's and 40's. Led by such notable intellectuals as Albert Jay Nock and H. L. Mencken, and by the Taft wing of the Republican party among the politicians, the older right wing was devoted to the liberty of the individual.

It therefore led the opposition to the growth of Big Government in America, a growth presided over by New Deal-Fair Deal liberalism. This older right wing upheld civil liberty and the economic freedom of the market economy while opposing government intervention, conscription, militarism, and American intervention and imperialism overseas.

Since the mid-1950's, however, the *National Review* has led the right into its present conservative stance. In rhetoric, the *National Review* upholds a "fusion" of liberty and order: in which the liberty of the individual is judiciously contained within a matrix of order supplied by the state. In his early days, William Buckley proclaimed himself a libertarian, with the single exception of the need to wage an all-out struggle against the "Communist conspiracy" at home and abroad. This concession was bad enough, as the entire thrust of conservative foreign policy was redirected toward militarism and empire.

But since the mid-50's, as the conservative movement has moved ever closer to the seats of power, whatever libertarian elements had been in the "fusion" have one by one disappeared. And so the *National Review* now supports, with scarcely a qualm, the gigantic misinvestment of the SST and space programs, the nationalization of passenger rail service, restrictions on imports, and virtually the entire Nixon program. It warmly supports laws enforcing moral codes, and opposes civil liberties, as well as the American tradition of separation of church and state. It was in response to this systematic shedding of their libertarian strands that so many right-wing youth have rebelled and have taken out on their own. The tensions and inner contradictions of the attempt to fuse liberty and order have finally split the conservative coalition apart.

The libertarian doctrine begins, not with the conservative community or state but with the individual. Every individual as an independent acting entity possesses the absolute right of "self-ownership"; that is, to own his or her person without molestation by others. From this axiom we derive total opposition to conscription and abortion laws. Secondly, each individual then has the right to own any

previously unowned resources (such as virgin land) that he finds and brings into use by exerting his personal energy upon the resource. From this is derived the right of "homesteading" landed property, and, as a consequence, all the other rights of private property. For if a man owns himself and his homesteaded land, he also has the right to own unmolested the land that he has transformed into capital, as well as the right to give his property to anyone he wishes (hence the right of inheritance) and to exchange his titles to property for anyone else's titles (hence the right of free contract and the laissez-faire free-market economy).

The conservative holds as one of his highest goals the preservation of "law and order," but his "order" and his "law" is the coercive dictation of the state. Throughout the ages, and in the present day as well, the state has lived through the profound disorder of continuing aggression against the person and property of countless individuals. It robs through taxation, enslaves through conscription and murders by way of club, bayonet, napalm and H-bomb. The libertarian holds that the state is permanent aggression and disorder, and that the *National Review* conservatives constitute some of the state's most articulate champions and apologists.

The young libertarians are not simply returning to Taft-era individualism. In asserting themselves as libertarians they are returning as well to the tradition that once established America as the proud beacon-light of freedom, the tradition of Jefferson, Paine, Jackson and Garrison. And in doing so, they are repudiating such conservative theorists as James Burnham of *National Review*, who has conceded that there is no rational foundation for government, and has asserted, in a reversion to the ancient despotic theories of divine right, that "in ancient times, before the illusions of science had corrupted traditional wisdom, the founders of cities (states) were known to be gods or demigods."

Bumham's recent call in *National Review* for a new Bismarck for America and for a re-evaluation of fascism-is the logical culmination of conservative statism and obscurantism. The libertarians, in contrast, are raising the standards of freedom and reason on which this country was founded.
