THE ELECTIONS

1. The most important fact of the election was the evisceration of the Republican Party. The unrecognized great truth of American politics is that the Republican Party has been moribund for many years; it has been twenty years since the Republicans have controlled Congress, and there is no sign of resumed control in even the far distant future. Nixon's landslide in 1972 was less important than the remarkable fact that the Democrats continued in total control of both houses of Congress, and have done so throughout the Nixon-Ford administrations. We have had a one-party system for twenty years, and there can be no healthy evolution in American politics until we all become aware of that fact. The massive repudiation of the Republican Party in 1974 should begin the healthy process of officially burying its moribund carcass.

2. The happily low participation in the vote (about 38% of eligible voters) is a clear sign that what the public was doing was not so much endorsing the Democrats as registering their disgusted repudiation of the Republicans. Indeed, the disgust with both parties was evident throughout the country. And why should the party of Watergate, of tyranny and corruption, of me-tooing the left-liberal big spending and statist policies of the Democrats, not have been repudiated? The Republicans stand for nothing except personal power, and the era of Watergate has made this stance crystal clear. As for the conservative wing of the Republican party, they discredited themselves forevermore by supinely forming the last loyalist bastion of the insufferable statist policies of the Democrats, not have been repudiated? The American public, would have to be consistent: it would have to oppose, for example, government spending on warfare as well as on welfare. It would have to adopt a frankly "isolationist" policy of peace and non-intervention abroad, thereby appealing to a public sick of war scares and foreign giveaways. But to do so, it would have to engage in a true ideological "revolution" against the National Review and allied leadership, and this it shows no real signs of doing. Certainly, such a revolutionary change could be effected; but it would require both an intelligence and a will that shows no signs of forthcoming on the right-wing.

3. One of the most fascinating aftermaths of the election has been the continuing call by the conservative weekly Human Events for repudiating, at long last, the Republican Party, and for the formation of a Reagan third-party ticket in 1976. It has finally become clear to Human Events that whether or not there is "an emerging conservative majority among the public, there sure won't be any "emerging Republican majority" (to quote the famous phrase of conservative strategist Kevin Phillips.)

A conservative third-party would have the healthy consequence of possibly completing the destruction of the discredited Republican party, and thereby forcing an ideological re-alignment of American politics comparable to the destruction of the Whigs and their replacement by the Republicans in the 1850's.

A truly "Old Right" party, a renascent party of small government, drastic tax and budget cuts, and a free economy would be a truly pleasant development. Not only would its emergence be a healthy development in itself, but it would also form the "water" for a Libertarian Party to "swim in", for the LP could continually point to the inevitable gap between the Old Right party's libertarian rhetoric and its compromised reality, and thereby serve to push such a party in an ever more libertarian direction. Libertarian ideas could only advance in such a climate.

But the chances of such a genuinely limited government party emerging are small indeed. For the right-wing has suffered for two decades now under the thrall of the cunning and articulate statists of National Review, and it shows no signs of casting off this domination. In an age that evidently suffers from a swollen and aggrandized Executive, National Review now calls once more for an even stronger Presidency, a call implicitly supported by the actions of the moronic loyalists of the Nixon regime. Furthermore, under the National Review aegis, the right-wing continues to be the party of global war and intervention abroad, and of state big-business corporatism, the military-industrial complex, and coerced "morality" at home. A new "Old Right" party, to be credible to the American public, would have to be consistent: it would have to oppose, for example, government spending on warfare as well as on welfare. It would have to adopt a frankly "isolationist" policy of peace and non-intervention abroad, thereby appealing to a public sick of war scares and foreign giveaways. But to do so, it would have to engage in a true ideological "revolution" against the National Review and allied leadership, and this it shows no real signs of doing. Certainly, such a revolutionary change could be effected; but it would require both an intelligence and a will that shows no signs of forthcoming on the right-wing.

4. There are, however, some encouraging results of the November election, of thrusts in a libertarian direction. Apart from the Libertarian Party (detailed further below), the most notable was the surprise victory of independent James B. Longley as governor of Maine, for the first time in decades a genuine independent beat both of the far-better known and organized Democrat and Republican candidates. Equally important was the reason for Longley's candidacy and presumably his victory. Longley, a wealthy 50-year-old insurance executive who rose from the ranks of poverty, had been the head of a Maine Management and Cost Survey, which recommended a cut in the Maine budget of $24 million per year. When the politicians ignored the commission's recommendations, Longley dropped out of the Democratic Party to run for governor on the cost-saving platform. In short, Longley ran and won purely on the crucial issue of cutting government taxation and spending.

Uncompromising and independent, Longley noted, after his victory, that "credibility of politicians was definitely an issue in this campaign. Too many politicians follow the strategy of going where the fish are and saying what the fish want to hear. I just refused to do that." Also notable was the Longley campaign's attraction for a large number of volunteer college students throughout the state. Furthermore, Longley sees the national significance of his victory: "This election is shining like that beacon off the coast of Maine. I can see other candidates all over the country running on the Longley model."
Voting And Politics

On the night before election, and again on the Today show on election morning, I appeared on nationwide NBC-TV, denouncing politics and declaring that I never vote. Despite the fact that the interview was a pure fluke, taken while minding my own business on a New Haven bus, that it was severely edited and truncated on TV to fit the anti-politics theme of mass sentiment as picked up by the reporters, I was immediately besieged by phone calls from libertarians throughout the country. Some LP people attacked me for not mentioning Tuccille and the LP, while the anti-politics forces hailed me for—at last—denouncing all politics and voting. Since I have been accused of inconsistency in being one of the few libertarians who favor both the Libertarian Party and Sy Leon's League of Non-Voters, perhaps I can seize this occasion to make my views on the politics-voting question— I hope—crystal clear:

1. I am indeed opposed to the State and therefore to politics. If the State-and-politics disappeared tomorrow no one would be happier than myself.

2. The fewer people that vote in any election, therefore, the better. The fewer the votes, the greater the evident anti-politics sentiment throughout the country, and the greater the implicit repudiation of the entire political system. The fact that only 38% of the eligible voters cast their ballots in the 1974 election— the lowest voting percentage in three decades— is one of the most heartening results of the election. It is no coincidence that all politicians from President Ford on down begged the electorate to endorse the American Way by voting, voting for either party (“We don't care who you vote for, but for God's sake VOTE!”) Think of how glorious it would be if the next President were elected by a popular vote of five, to four for his opponent. The smaller the vote, the more ridiculous the claim for a “popular mandate” for the victor.

Unfortunately, politicians tend to interpret low voting as “apathy” instead of hostility to the political system (although that concept is now changing, pace the findings of NBC-TV that throughout the country people are disgusted with all politicians). Hence the importance of the League of Non-Voters' campaign to transform the alleged “apathy” of non-voters into an explicit repudiation of the political system.

3. I don't vote, and haven't done so in two decades, not because I believe voting itself to be immoral (as do the anti-LP libertarians), but because of the reasons in point No. 2, and because one person's vote is of marginal importance, approaching zero. And for another and for me overriding reason: that the roll for compulsory jury slavery is taken from the voting lists. Compulsory jury duty differs only in degree, not in kind, from the slavery of conscription.

4. However, and unfortunately, neither politics nor voting are going to disappear overnight. Confronted with the fact that tens of millions of Americans are going to continue voting, what party should we support? Whom should we hope wins the elections? Does it make any difference who wins? I contend that it usually makes a great deal of difference. Jefferson was better than Hamilton, Jackson than Adams, Gladstone than Disraeli, Judge Parker than Teddy Roosevelt, etc. A fortiori, the Libertarian Party is infinitely better than any of the other contenders, for many important reasons: as an educational vehicle of unequalled force in influencing the public and the media; as a method of putting pressure on the other parties and on the government to curb their statist policies; and as an eventual conduit for rolling back the State. Of course, there are risks in the LP becoming corrupted if it becomes a major political force, but there are risks in any course of action or inaction. Life itself is a risk.

The grippers who sit on the sidelines and carp about the LP have a responsibility, it seems to me, to come up with a course of action that will be at least as, if not more, effective than the LP in spreading the ideas and the influence of libertarianism. So far, the non-party ad hoc organizations have had only a minimal impact. The more impact that any tactical roads may have— be they the LP or any form of non-party organization— the better. This, the area of tactics, is one of the few cases where the pragmatic attitude is the proper one. Let a hundred libertarian flowers bloom. As far as I know, no one in the LP spends any time criticizing the various non-party individuals or organizations; why do the latter expend so much of their time criticizing the LP? Is it because the LP has been so successful?

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country doing what I did.” (On Longley, see Robert W. Merry, “Pols Scratch Heads Over Upset in Maine,” National Observer, Nov. 16; and the New York Times, Nov. 7.)

5. Which brings us to the campaigns of the Libertarian Party for this was the first election in which the fledgling LP fielded candidates in many parts of the country. In California, the California Libertarian Alliance, with the help of some LP members, accomplished the seemingly impossible by not only triumphing over the socialists in the Peace and Freedom Party primary, but also by winning control at the state party convention, and proceeding to adopt a platform that is, from all reports, even more libertarian than the LP platform. The new PFP platform calls for the abolition of taxation, and for the immediate withdrawal of all American troops and armed installations outside the territory of the U.S. Bravely! It also advances the principle of secession and decentralization by calling for the secession of California from the U.S. In the competition for purity of libertarian principle, can the LP remain behind?

In fact, the libertarians of California had a true embarasse de richesse this November, with two sets of state-wide slates, the Hospers ticket on the LP, and the Elizabeth Keathley ticket on the PFP. Unfortunately, the LP was not on the ballot, and from all accounts the Hospers write-in campaign did not garner very many votes. On the other hand, the Keathley slate obtained somewhere in the neighborhood of 100,000 votes; and one of its state-wide candidates managed to obtain the 2% of the total vote needed for the PFP to remain on the California ballot for the next four years. Huzzahs are in order, although I understand that the one candidate who accomplished this was one of the non-libertarians on the slate. The question remains: granting the splendid nature of the Keathley victory in the primary and at the state convention, and the success of the PFP in remaining on the ballot, will the libertarian forces be able to retain control in the face of an expected attempt at counter-revolution by the socialists? At any rate, the Keathley campaign garnered a great deal of media publicity, and, if the libertarians keep control, they may grant the Presidential ticket of the LP in 1976 a line on the ballot in a state that has more organized libertarians than any other.

In Ohio, Kathleen Harroff, former chairman of the Ohio LP, ran a determined and energetic campaign as an independent for the U.S. Senate (the nature of Ohio election laws precluded an LP race for the Senate.) She obtained the remarkable total of 79,000 votes, approximately 2.7% of the total vote.

In New York, Jerry Tuccille's campaign for governor mustered the energy and enthusiasm of a large number of bright and able libertarians. It gained the quiet support of numerous important Conservatives disgruntled with the statist Buckleyite rule of the Conservative Party, and Free Libertarian Party candidates for state Assembly Mary Jo Wanzer and Virginia Lee Walker gained Conservative Party endorsement, the latter by defeating the C.P. designee in the primary party. Mrs. Walker, by the way, garnered about 6.5% of the total vote for Assembly on the Conservative line (FLP votes have still not been reported by the lagged state officialdom.)

Perhaps the most important fruits of the Tuccille campaign were the attention and publicity it gained for libertarianism in the media. At least four favorable articles about the campaign were published in the New York Times, as well as in other newspapers in New York City and throughout the state. The Tuccille campaign, operating on a veritable shoestring, managed to buy TV-space with a splendid ad— a first for a minor party in the history of New York State. Furthermore, favorable national media attention was gained for the Tuccille campaign. George F. Will, syndicated columnist for the Washington Post, endorsed Tuccille— an interesting defection from the Conservative ranks by National Review's Washington editor. Furthermore, the increasingly libertarian Washington Post columnist Nicholas von Hoffman— in addition to several splendid articles on the national economy— endorsed the

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The inter-Arab conference at Rabat, Morocco, held at the end of October, was not just another conference: it was one of the most significant events in the modern history of the Middle East. Rabat changes the scene in the Middle East and will be affecting world history for many years to come. The significance of Rabat was that, for the first time, the three long-standing Arab nations, long in dispute and seemingly always ready to seize natural resources, are coming together in the United Nations, moving the question of the national and the property rights of the Palestinians from the Jordanian roadblock. Ever since its artificial creation after World War I, Jordan has been an expression of Western imperialism; and ever since its grab of the West Bank of Palestine after the 1948 conflict, it has been the major and determined Arab enemy of the national aspirations of the displaced and dispossessed Palestinian Arabs. Jordanian King Hussein's sudden massacre of the Palestinian guerrillas in the “black September” of 1970 almost wrote Emps to Palestinian aspirations. But now all that is ended; and King Hussein at Rabat once and for all liquidated all his claims to the West Bank on behalf of the Palestinians and their representatives in the Palestine Liberation Organization. Hussein and Jordan will no longer form a major implicit support for the continued agrandizement of the State of Israel. Even Egypt, which Hussein had counted on for support, joined the other Arab nations in support of Palestine, as did the conservative King Faisal of Saudi Arabia, motivated to a large extent by a desire to end the Zionist-Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, a city dear to the religions of Moslems as well as Christians and Jews. Hussein's capitulation, indeed, was purchased by an annual subsidy of $300,000,000, contributed by the Arab states, and largely by King Faisal.

It was because of Rabat that the United Nations received Yasir Arafat, head of the PLO, as a conquering hero, with full honors of statehood. The recognition of the PLO has irrevocably shifted attention from the humanitarian problem of the Palestinian refugees to the political question of the nation, as well as property rights of the PLO. Arafat's appearance was treated with the usual incomprehension by the American media. On the lower levels, the media expressed disappointment that Arafat had not been moderated by world politics to become "responsible" and "realistic." Here, the American press showed itself unable to comprehend the politics of ideology, assuming as always that all nations' politics are cast in the opportunistic, unprincipled mould of the contemporary United States. Arafat and the PLO are revolutionaries, and no revolutionaries are going to sound like Eric Sevareid or Evans and Novak, regardless of the hopes and dreams of American "moderation." Reciting the history of Zionism and its conquest of Palestine, Arafat reaffirmed before a world audience the oft-expressed Palestinian ideal of a new, secular democratic state in Palestine, a land of full religious freedom "where Christian, Jew, and Muslim live in Justice, equality, fraternity, and progress."

What next, then, in the Middle East? First, it is all too clear that the Kissinger "miracle", ballyhooed only a few months ago, lies in complete shambles, as the Lib. Forum predicted ("Reflections on the Middle East", June, 1974). If Israel persists in its refusal to recognize or negotiate with the PLO, then the only sensible forecast is for another war in the Middle East. If such a "fifth round" develops, then the vital consideration for Americans, and even for the peace of the world, is that the United States stay the hell out, that it cease being the supplier of arms, aid and comfort for the State of Israel. Unfortunately, the chances of the U. S. remaining neutral are not very bright. In fact, they are made even dimer by the disquieting saber-rattling going on in Washington, the muttering threats of a U. S. invasion of one or more Arab countries in order to grab their oil. It is indeed bizarre that American leaders should virtually ratify the Leninist theory of imperialism by asserting that we must go to war in order to seize natural resources. There is, of course, another way to obtain Arab oil—a method hallowed in American and Western tradition—by buying it. If the price is "too high" (whatever that may mean), then the Arabs will have to lower their price in order to sell their oil, or else we can proceed to develop oil or other energy sources elsewhere.

Already, in fact, market forces are beginning to lower the price of oil and oil products. Gasoline price wars are happily beginning to appear once again throughout the United States. Business Week (November 9) recently reports that the hysteria heard last year about an American oil refinery "shortage" has already disappeared, to be replaced, mirabile

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Tuccille campaign in a ringing column (Oct. 25). Noting that the Free Libertarians "have that peculiar buoyancy which comes from believing in what you're doing and contrasts so strongly with the mainline politicians," von Hoffman added that the FLP are the spiritual descendents of Locke and Jefferson, and that they realize "freedom", which the Libertarians apply to gold as well as heroin, as well as to "dumping the Lockheeds, the Franklin National Banks and the Penn Central Railroads". Von Hoffman also pointed out that the FLP has cast off the "status quo aroma" of former times, and attracts former liberals fully as well as former conservatives. Cheering rather than apologizing for libertarianism as a "middle-class movement", von Hoffman pointed out that "that's hardly surprising since our concepts of individual liberty were born with the middle class and have never thrived in societies which don't have a large one." Von Hoffman ringingly concluded that "for the overtaxed, overregulated, overburdened and underpowered millions of the American middle class", the Libertarians "are the only people worth voting for."

But the publicity coup of the campaign was a favorable article about libertarianism, centered around the Tuccille race, in Newsweek (Nov. 11). Considering the quickie nature of its research, the Newsweek writers did a fine job in summing up the ideas and the movement of libertarianism, summed up in Jerry Tuccille's statement that "A libertarian is a conservative who believes in letting people have fun." National LP chairman Ed Crane, who has been doing a bang-up job since being installed this summer, promptly issued a Xeroxed flyer of the Tuccille campaign in a ringing column...
Economic Determinism, Ideology, And The American Revolution*

It is part of the inescapable condition of the historian that he must make estimates and judgments about human motivation even though he cannot ground his judgments in absolute and apodictic certainty. If, for example, we find that Nelson Rockefeller made a secret gift of $500,000 to Dr. William J. Ronan, we can choose to interpret Rockefeller's motivation in one of at least two ways: we can conclude, as did that eminent student of contemporary politics Wilson, that Nelson made this and similar gifts purely as "an act of love"; or we can conclude that some sort of political quid pro quo was involved in the transaction. In my view, the good historian (1) cannot escape making a judgment of motivation, and (2) will opt for the latter political judgment. Those historians who have made the realistic and what I hold to be the correct judgment have often been condemned as "materialists", or even "Marxists", but I contend that what they have assumed is their motivation, and therefore requires more work by the historian in digging it up and spreading it on the record.

Neither is the Mises point that men are guided not by their economic interests but by ideas very helpful in discussing this problem: for the real question is what ideas are guiding them — ideas about their economic interests or ideas about religion, morality, or whatever? Ideas need not be a highly abstract level; it did not take profound familiarity with philosophy, for example, for the export manufacturers to realize that foreign aid would provide them a fat subsidy out of the pockets of the American taxpayer.

No "economic determinist" worth his salt, however, has ever held that economic motives are the sole or even always the dominant wellsprings of human action. Thus, no one who has ever studied the early Calvinists could ever deny that fiery devotion to their new religious creed was the overriding motivation for their conversion and even for their secular activities. Although even in the case of the Reformation, we cannot overlook the economic motivation, for example, for the German princes in siding with Luther or for Henry VIII's confiscation of the wealth of the Roman Catholic monasteries. The point is in each case to give the economic motivation its due.

Can we, however, provide ourselves with a criterion, with a guide with which we can equip ourselves in at least our preliminary hypotheses about the weights of motivation? In short, can we formulate a theoretical guide which will indicate in advance whether or not an historical action will be predominantly for economic, or for ideological, motives? I think we can, although as far as I know we will be breaking new and untried ground.

Some years ago, an article in the Journal of the History of Ideas, in an attempt to score some points against the great "economic determinist" historian Charles A. Beard, charged that for Beard it was only his historical "bad guys" who were economically determined, whereas his "good guys" were governed largely by ideology. To the author, Beard's supposed "inconsistency" in this matter was enough to demolish the Beardian method. But my contention here is that in a sense, Beard wasn't so far wrong; and that, in fact, from the libertarian if not from the Beardian perspective, it is indeed true in a profound sense that the "bad guys" in history are largely economically motivated, and the "good guys" ideologically motivated. Note that the operative term here, of course, is "largely" rather than "exclusively".

Let us see why this should be so. The essence of the State through history is that a minority of the population, who constitute a "ruling class", govern, live off of, and exploit the majority, or the "ruled." Since a majority cannot live parasitically off a minority without the economy (Continued On Page 5)

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After Rabat, What? —

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dictus, by a "surplus of capacity". The "shortage" was removed by additions to refinery capacity, and especially by the American government's removal, in the spring of 1973, of its disastrous 14-year program of restricting oil imports.

Furthermore, the much-touted theory that the increase in Arab oil prices is "responsible" for inflation is economic balderdash. An increase in one price does not "cause inflation". On the contrary, the paying of higher prices for one product would ordinarily lead one to look for only one option: to cut their demand for other products, and thereby to lower other prices. The rise of prices in general cannot be caused by occurrences in one industry; they can only result from increases in consumer demand, which in turn can only come about from governmental increases in the supply of money — of dollars and of other world currencies. To blame the Arabs for American and Western accelerating inflation is but one more example of the age-old device of governments to find scapegoats for their own counterfeiting, their own continuing creation of new supplies of money. Throughout history, scapegoats for inflation have been found by governments among numerous unpopular groups: speculators, black marketeers, big businessmen, unions, greedy consumers, aliens, Jews and now the Arabs. Meanwhile, government's own inflationary activities go merrily on, as President Ford, in his "anti-inflation" speech, while urging us to clean our plates and sporting a nuns' skull WIN button, hastens to assure us that the Federal Reserve Board will continue to pour out "adequate" amounts of new money.

Meanwhile, there is only one hope for Israel in the short run to avoid another round of war: to abandon its post-1967 conquests and to allow a "mini-Palestine" state organized by the PLO in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In the likely event that Israel refuses to do so, it guarantees substantive unity between the PLO and the militant Palestinian forces that reject the entire idea of a transitional mini-state and insist on nothing less than an immediate establishment of the full "maxi" Palestine. Refusal to deal with Arafat and the PLO will force a confrontation with the ideas, if not the personnel, of Dr. George Habash and his "rejection front", which may make Israel long for the days of Arafat just as it now longs for the days of King Hussein.
Economic Determinism — (Continued From Page 4)

and the system breaking down very quickly, and since the majority can never act permanently by itself but must always be governed by an oligarchy, every State will persist by plundering the majority on behalf of a ruling minority. A further or corollary reason for the inevitability of minority rule is the pervasive fact of the division of labor: the majority of the public must spend most of its time about the business of making a daily living. Hence the actual rule of the State must be left to full-time professionals who are necessarily a minority of the society.

Throughout history, then, the State has consisted of a minority plundering and tyrannizing over a majority. This brings us to the great question, the great mystery if you will, of political philosophy: the mystery of civil obedience. From Etienne de La Boetie to David Hume to Ludwig von Mises, political philosophers have shown that no State — no minority — can continue long in power unless supported, even if passively, by the majority. Why then do the majority continue to accept or support the State when they are clearly acquiescing in their own exploitation and subjection? Why do the majority continue to obey the minority?

Here we arrive at the age-old role of the intellectuals, the opinion-moulding groups in society. The ruling class — be they warlords, nobles, feudal landlords, or monopoly merchants, or a coalition of several of these groups — must employ intellectuals to convince the majority of the public that their rule is beneficent, inevitable, necessary, and even divine. The dominant role of the intellectual through history is that of the modern times being largely replaced by "scientific" technocrats. The ideology is spread through society by the Court Intellectuals is merely an elaborate subsidy by the ruling class for their own economic interests. The ideology is the rationalization for their venal economic interests. The ideology is the direct economic interests of making a profit. The intellectuals that they played the central role in forming and guiding the radical movements of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries (the Calvinist movement) must have been centrally motivated by a newly adopted and commonly shared ideology.

The turn now to the insight of such disparate political theorists as Marx and Mises, how do the masses of subjects acquire this guiding and determining ideology? By the very nature of the masses, it is impossible for them to arrive at such a revolution in opposition to an existing State on their own. Habituated as they are to their narrow and daily rounds, uninterested in ideology as they normally are, concerned with daily living, it is impossible for the masses to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps to hammer out an ideological movement in opposition to the existing State. Here we arrive at the vital role of the intellectuals. It is only intellectuals, the full-time professionals in ideas, who can have the vision, the courage, the determination and the organization to form and spread the word to the masses. In contrast to the statist Court Intellectual, whose role is a junior partner in the opposition or revolutionary ideology and then to spread the ideology to the masses, thereby welding them into a revolutionary movement.

An important corollary is that in weighing the motivations of the intellectuals themselves or even of the masses, it is generally true that setting oneself up in opposition to an existing State is a lonely, thorny, and dangerous road. It would usually be to the direct economic interests of the radical intellectuals to allow themselves to "sell out", to be coopted by the ruling State apparatus. Those intellectuals who choose the radical opposition path, then, can scarcely be dominated by economic motivations, for on the one hand, their economic interests are the economic interests of making a profit. The intellectuals that they played the central role in forming and guiding the mass movements of the modern world in opposition to the State: from the Calvinist upsurge of the Reformation to the classical liberal and radical movements of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

Let us now apply our framework to an analysis of the historiography of the American Revolution. In the long-standing controversy over the Beard-Becker approach, the"economic determinists", the"American history dominated by the intellectuals that they played the central role in forming and guiding the mass movements of the modern world in opposition to the State: from the Calvinist upsurge of the Reformation to the classical liberal and radical movements of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.

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statist drive for power which brought about the U.S. Constitution, falls signally when applied to the great anti-statist events of the American Revolution.

The Beard-Becker approach sought to apply an economic determinist framework to the American Revolution, and specifically a framework of inherent conflict between various major economic classes. The vital flaw in the Beard-Becker model was twofold. First, they did not understand the primary role of ideas in guiding any revolutionary or opposition movement. Second, and this is an issue we have not had time to deal with, they did not understand that there are no inherent economic conflicts of the free market; without government intrusion, there is no reason for merchants, farmers, landlords, et al. to be at loggerheads. Conflict is only created between those classes which rule the State as against those which are exploited by the State. Not understanding this crucial point, the Beard-Becker historians framed their analysis in terms of the allegedly conflicting class interests of, in particular, merchants and farmers. Since the merchants clearly led the way in revolutionary agitation, the Beard-Becker approach has to conclude that the merchants, in agitating for revolution, were aggressively pushing their class interests at the expense of the deluded farmers.

But now the economic determinists were confronted with a basic problem: if indeed the revolution was against the class interests of the mass of the farmers, how come that the latter supported the revolutionary movement? To this key question, the determinists had two answers. One was the common view — based on a misreading of a letter by John Adams — that the Revolution was indeed supported by only a minority of the population; in the famous formulation, one-third of the populace was supposed to have supported the revolution, one-third opposed, and one-third were neutral. This view flies in the face of our understanding of the American Revolution. It was not an agrarian aristocracy which was opposed to a small minority of the population, but rather an entire way of life that was being attacked by a powerful and expanding state.

Furthermore, the economic determinists, in their eagerness to show the class interests at the expense of the deluded farmers.

The Beard-Becker school had another answer to the puzzle of majority support of the Revolution: namely that the farmers were deluded into such support by the "propaganda" beamed at them by the upper classes. In effect, these historians transferred the analysis of the role of ideology as a rationalization of class interests from its proper use to explain State action to a fallacious use in trying to understand mass movements. In this approach, they relied on the jejune theory of "propaganda" common in the 1920's and 1930's under the inspiration of Harold Lasswell: namely, that no major social movement, without government support, can ever succeed. As confirmation, it was one of the positive contributions of the later "consensus" school of American history of such scholars as John Alden and Edmund Morgan, to demonstrate conclusively that the Revolution had the active support of a large majority of the American public.

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The two parts of your editor’s European trip this summer of interest to libertarians were: the biennial meeting of the Mont Pelerin Society at Brussels, and sizing up the state of the libertarian movement and of the general political situation in Great Britain.

Mont Pelerin.

The Mont Pelerin Society is an international organization of several hundred people ostensibly devoted to the free market economy. Begun just after World War II, the American branch of the Society, which is now approximately 130 members and guests appeared, and at the meeting over 100 people ostensibly devoted to the free market economy. Begun just after World War II, the American branch of the Society, which is now approximately 130 members, shows how it is the logical extension of free-market principles. Then, we had Reports from the Movements in various countries, most of which we hadn’t known existed until finding each other at Brussels. These reports only served to inform each group of the existence of the others, but also to impress the newcomers with the rising tide of the libertarian movement in the various countries. Thus, we heard from Michiel van Notten, dynamic young Dutch businessman who is forming an anarcho-capitalist group in Holland, consisting of about nine persons. We found out that a thriving movement of lawyers, economists, and businessmen has developed in Madrid, consisting of a Messianic circle of about 40 people who meet regularly, of whom from five to nine are anarcho-capitalists known as the “Rothbardiners.” The Spanish group regularly translates Austrian economics and libertarian works into Spanish. The attorney Luis Reig reported from this group. From England we heard from the dynamic and indefatigable Pauline Russell, who has sparked a rapid growth of anarchist and quasi-anarchist libertarians in that country. Pauline as well as most of the English movement may be best described as teetering somewhere between limited government and anarcho-capitalism, with national defense and an emotional attachment to the monarchy still posing some problems. Then Roger MacBride wound up the reportage.

Economic Determinism —

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conclusively that the conspiracy was all too real, and that what some historians have labeled as the “paranoia” of the colonists turned out to be an insightful apprehension of reality, an insight that was of course fueled by the colonists’ understanding of the very nature and essence of State power itself.

While Bernard Bailyn has not continued his studies beyond the Revolution, his students Gordon Wood and Pauline Maier have done so, with unfortunate results. For how can one apply the concept of a “transforming libertarian radicalism”, of a mass ideological hatred of the State and of the executive, to the movement for a Constitution which was the very antithesis of the libertarian and radical ideal? By trying to do so, Wood and Maier lose the idea of radical libertarianism altogether, and wind up in yet another form of consensus view of the Constitution. Yet the battle over the adoption of the Constitution was a fierce ideological and economic conflict; and in understanding that movement and that conflict we must turn to the neo-Beardian approach of such historians as Jackson Turner Main, E. James Ferguson, and Alfred Young, which stresses the economic and class interests behind thisagrargmentizement of a powerful central government. Furthermore, the Anti-Federalist resistance to the Constitution was fueled, not only by resistance to these economic depredations, but also and above all by the very ideology of Liberty versus Power that had sparked and guided the American Revolution. A glance at the eloquent speeches against the Constitution by Patrick Henry is enough to highlight the libertarian leitmotif of the anti-statist Revolution as well as the anti-statist resistance to the Constitution. Hence, the original insight of the Beadrians was correct: that the Constitution was a reaction against the Revolution rather than its fulfillment.

The idea of economic motivation as the prime mover of statist actions through history, as contrasted to ideology as the major guide of anti-statist movements, is thus confirmed by analyzing the historiography of the American Revolution. Perhaps adoption of this basic framework will prove fruitful in the analysis of other important events and movements in human history.

A paper delivered at the Libertarian Scholars Conference, Oct. 28, in New York City.

“All the extravagance and incompetence of our present Government is due, in the main, to lawyers, and, in part at least, to good ones. They are responsible for nine-tenths of the useless and vicious laws that now clutter the statute-books, and for all the evils that go with the vain attempt to enforce them. Every Federal judge is a lawyer. So are most Congressmen. Every invasion of the plain rights of the citizen has a lawyer behind it. If all lawyers were hanged tomorrow, and their bones sold to a mah-jong factory, we’d all be freer and safer, and our taxes would be reduced by almost a half.”

— H. L. Mencken
Report From Europe —
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with a description of the growth of the Libertarian Party in the U.S. and Canada. All in all, it was a great breakthrough for anarcho-capitalism in a setting that no one would have predicted a few years ago could ever be in the slightest degree hospitable. Will we have our own Libertarian International in a few years?

The British Situation.
Great Britain is clearly in a total economic mess, ten (twenty?) years ahead of the United States down the road to galloping inflation, crippling controls, and stifling taxation. Controls are causing the usual haphazard succession of shortages, and, when we were in England, sugar and bottles were disappearing from the market. No one, but no one, invests in the English stock market, which makes ours seem a picture of health and prosperity. While many politicians understand the monetary cause of inflation, there is no will to stop the process because of the phobia about recession and unemployment (sound familiar?) At any rate, British society seems to be polarizing very rapidly, what with the ever-present inflation, there is no will to stop the process because of the phobia about recession and unemployment (sound familiar?) At any rate, British society seems to be polarizing very rapidly, what with the ever-present recession and unemployment. All in all, it was a great breakthrough for anarcho-capitalism in a setting that no one would have predicted a few years ago could ever be in the slightest degree hospitable. Will we have our own Libertarian International in a few years?

Tory leadership — will follow is certainly problematical, at least for the short run. Of the Tories now in the running to succeed Heath, the most free-market oriented is Sir Keith Joseph, who however suffers from the familiar syndrome of politicians in being far more libertarian out of power than he is in power. At any rate, Powell has cleverly found a new political base among the Ulster Unionists and is now back in Parliament after refusing to run on the Tory platform in the previous election. In some ways, the small but growing English movement is a microcosm of the American, Split off from the Pauline Russell group is a smaller group of “hard core anarcho-capitalist purists”, who scorn any form of political action, or indeed any truck with non-purists, as a sellout of libertarian principle. This youthful group is led by Mark Brady and Chris Tame. The Russell wing, in the meanwhile, took the first tentative steps in the October election toward the formation of a Libertarian Party of Great Britain (in Britain, it is relatively easy and inexpensive for a new party to get on the ballot.) The libertarian businesswoman Mrs. Theresa Moore Gorman ran for Parliament as an “Independent Freedom” candidate from her home constituency of Streatham, an outlying suburb of London. We have not yet been able to find out how Teresa fared at the balloting.

Finally, just before leaving for Europe, we found out that the small but growing libertarian movement in Australia has decided to form the Libertarian Party of Australia. For the first time, libertarianism is bidding fair to become a genuine international movement.