

Publishers of  
ONE-SENTENCE ECONOMICS  
AND WORLD LEPROSY  
- Howard W. ElHommedien

An end to monopoly - in government, banking, land, patents, mergers, trade unions, medicine.

Rational, humane laws. Prisons abolished; replaced by fines, with psychiatric treatment if necessary.

# PUBLIC PRESS

P.O. BOX 71

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS 60006

## Excerpts From

### THE LAW

-Frederic Bastiat (1850)

If every person has the right to defend his person, his liberty, and his property, then it follows that a group of men have the right to organize and support a common force to protect these rights constantly. Thus the principle of collective right-its reason for existing, its lawfulness-is based on individual right. And the common force that protects this collective right cannot logically have any other purpose or any other mission than that for which it acts as a substitute. Thus, since an individual cannot lawfully use force against the person, liberty, or property of another individual, then the common force-for the same reason-cannot lawfully be used to destroy the person, liberty, or property of individuals or groups.

But, unfortunately, law by no means confines itself to its proper functions. The law has placed the collective force at the disposal of the unscrupulous who wish, without risk, to exploit the person, liberty, and property of others. It has converted plunder into a right, in order to protect plunder. And it converted lawful defense into a crime, in order to punish lawful defense. The annals of history bear witness to the truth of it: the incessant wars, mass migrations, religious persecutions, universal slavery, dishonesty in commerce, and menepelies. ..generally, the law is made by one man or one class of men. Thus, when plunder is organized by law for the profit of those who make the law, all the plundered classes try somehow to enter..into the making of laws. ..But then, participation in the making of law becomes universal. And then, men seek to balance their conflicting interests by universal plunder. Instead of rooting out the injustices found in society, they make these injustices general.

In the first place, it erases from everyone's conscience the distinction between justice and injustice. ..Thus, in order to make plunder appear just and sacred to many consciences, it is only necessary for the law to decree and sanction it. ".in government-endowed teaching positions, the professor rigorously refrain from endangering in the slightest degree the respect due to the laws now in force."..Under the pretense of organization, regulation, protection, or encouragement, the law takes property from one person and gives it to another; the law takes the wealth of all and gives it to a few-whether farmers, manufacturers, shipowners, artists, or comedians. ..The excluded classes..will say to you... "Others use the law to raise the prices of bread, meat, iron, or cloth. ..we also would like to use the law for our own profit. We demand from the law the right to relief, which is the poor man's plunder. To obtain the right, we also should be voters and legislators in order that we may organize Beggary on a grand scale for our own class, as you have organized Protection on a grand scale for your class. .."

But how is this legal plunder to be identified? ..See if the law benefits one citizen at the expense of another by doing what the citizen himself cannot do without committing a crime. Then abolish this law without delay, for it is not only an evil itself, but also it is a fertile source for further evils because it invites reprisals. ..The person who profits from this law will complain bitterly, defending his acquired rights. He will claim that the state is obligated to protect and encourage his particular industry; that this procedure enriches the state because the protected industry is thus able to spend more and to pay higher wages to the poor workingmen. Do not listen to this sophistry by vested interests. The acceptance of these arguments will build legal plunder into a whole system. In fact, this has already occurred.

Assess full ground rent, without exception, for ethical revenue source, low improvement taxes, an end to speculation. Charge sites at true rental value will ensure a surplus of safe employment, at wages equal to one's production.

Government restitution for official or private injuries. Polygraph tests to be accepted as evidence.

Now, legal plunder can be committed in an infinite number of ways. ..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. ..The Choice Before Us:..1. The few plunder the many. 2. Everybody plunders everybody. 3. Nobody plunders anybody. ..No legal plunder: This is the principle of justice, peace, order, stability, harmony, and logic. ..But when the law, by means of its necessary agent, force, imposes upon men a regulation of labor, a method or a subject of education, a religious faith or creed-then the law is no longer negative; ..When this happens the people no longer need to discuss, to compare, to plan ahead; the law does all this for them. Intelligence becomes a useless prep for the people; they cease to be men; they lose their personality, their liberty, their property.

You say: "There are persons who have no money," and you turn to the law. But the law is not a breast that fills itself with milk. ..You say: "There are persons who lack education," and you turn to the law. But the law is not, in itself, a torch of learning which shines its light abroad. ..You say: "Here are persons who are lacking in morality or religion," and you turn to the law. But law is force. And need I point out what a violent and futile effort it is to use force in the matters of morality and religion? ..The writers assume that people are inert matter, passive particles, motionless atoms, at best a kind of vegetation indifferent to its own manner of existence. They assume that people are susceptible to being shaped-by the will and hand of another person-into an infinite variety of forms, more or less symmetrical, artistic, and perfected. ..Moreover, even where they have consented to recognize a principle of action in the heart of man-and a principle of discernment in man's intellect-they have considered these gifts of God to be fatal gifts.

According to these writers, it is indeed fortunate that Heaven has bestowed upon certain men-governors and legislators-the exact opposite inclinations, not only for their own sake but also for the sake of the rest of the world! While mankind tends toward evil, the legislators yearn for good; while mankind advances toward darkness, the legislators aspire for enlightenment; while mankind is drawn toward vice, the legislators are attracted toward virtue. ..Oh, sublime writers! Please remember sometimes that this clay, this sand, and this manure which you so arbitrarily dispose of, are men! They are your equals! They are intelligent and free human beings like yourselves! As you have, they too have received from God the faculty to observe, to plan ahead, to think, and to judge for themselves! ..We understand that liberty means competition. But according to Mr. Louis Blanc, competition is a system that ruins the businessmen and exterminates the people. It is for this reason that free people are ruined and exterminated in proportion to their degree of freedom.

It is not true that the legislator has absolute power over our persons and property. The existence of persons and property preceded the existence of the legislator, and his function is only to guarantee their safety. ..And I defy anyone to say how even the thought of revolution, of insurrection, of the slightest uprising could arise against a government whose organized force was confined only to suppressing injustice. ..My attitude toward all other persons is well illustrated by this story from a celebrated traveler: He arrived one day in the midst of a tribe of savages, where a child had just been born. A crowd of seethers, magicians, and quacks-armed with rings, hooks, and cords-surrounded it. One said: "This child will never smell the perfume of a peace-pipe unless I stretch his nostrils." Another said: "He will never be able to hear unless I draw his ear-lobes down to his shoulders." A third said: "He will never see the sunshine unless I slant his eyes." Another said: "He will never stand upright unless I bend his legs." A fifth said: "He will never learn to think unless I flatten his skull." "Stop," cried the traveler. "What God does is well done. Do not claim to know more than He. God has given organs to this frail creature; let them develop and grow strong by exercise, use, experience, and liberty." ..And now that the legislators and do-gooders have so futilely inflicted so many systems upon society, may they finally end where they should have begun: May they reject all systems, and try liberty, for liberty is an acknowledgment of faith in God and His works. (Indirect plunder, of unassessed ground rent, all unearned, must go, to end hoarding and speculative pricing of sites, and assure surplus work and home building opportunities.)