

# *anarchy in kansas*

Issue #2

February 2001

Kansas City, KS

## We Don't Need No Education We Don't Need No Thought Control

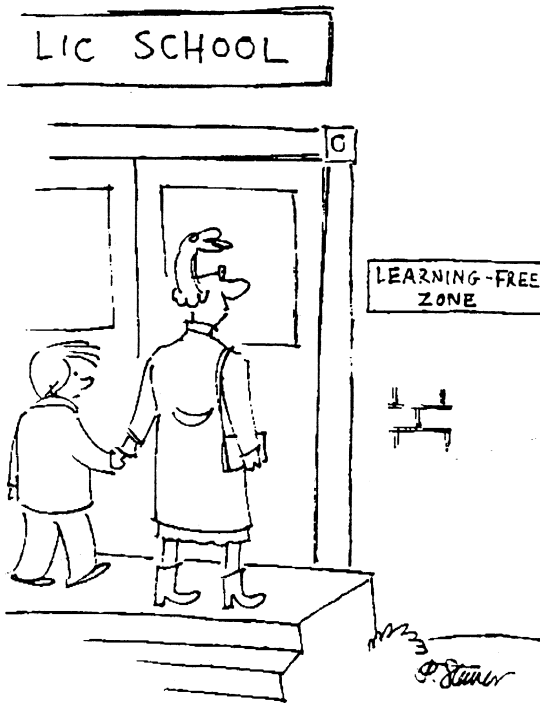
There has been controversy in kansas over the teaching of evolution in government schools since 1999, when evolution was "de-emphasized" in science teaching at the behest of an elected state education board. Opponents of teaching about evolution consider it just another theory about human development, comparable to that of creationism or intelligent design and feel the state should not favor one of these theories over another in its science curriculum. While this issue seems to be resolved at present since a pro-evolution majority was elected to the state board in 2000, during the debates about evolution no one seemed to be concerned about the broader question of whether the government should be mandating anything regarding what is taught to students, or even whether the state should be in the business of education at all.

From christian conservatives to "free-thinkers" it appears that most people in kansas and the rest of the united states favor the continued existence of government schools. Even when people disagree with what or how the schools are teaching, they organize to change only the parts of the

curriculum or the methods they dislike, never challenging the very institution of compulsory "public" education: conservative religionists try to get prayer back into schools and evolution out, while atheists try to make the schools god-free, but neither side suggests freeing children from the system altogether. They all agree that it is alright to indoctrinate all students with certain ideas. They simply differ on what those ideas should be. It is rare to hear anyone advocate dismantling the government schools system and letting people provide for the education of themselves and their children without the interference of politicians.

The worst thing about government schools is not that they promote this or that incorrect or inaccurate idea, bad as that may be, but that participation in them is forced. Children are required to attend these schools by compulsory education laws, and working people are compelled to support them with tax money extorted from them. While these laws do allow children other education options besides government schools, their parents are taxed whether their children attend public schools or not,

making private alternatives unaffordable to many. And even when parents and children do manage to choose non-government methods of teaching and learning, they are still hounded by the state. Governments presume to license or approve private schools and require home schoolers or deschoolers to present education plans or curricula to education bureaucrats for their approval before they are allowed to educate their children themselves.



Government schools have a mission: to educate children sufficiently that they can function as workers in the american economy, and to indoctrinate them in the ideas important to the continuation of current economic and political institutions.

While they often do a lousy job of teaching even basic skills like reading, writing, and arithmetic, public schools are quite efficient in promoting loyalty and obedience to government, hierarchical relationships, and conformity among students. Students are forced to pledge allegiance to the government's flag; vote in mock presidential elections; participate in behavior control programs like the cop-run DARE; perform mandatory community service, which is paradoxically called "volunteerism;" engage in team-building activities where they are taught to sacrifice their individuality to be part of the group; and, more and more often, wear uniforms. They are forced to attend classes, eat, and even use the bathroom on a rigid schedule. They are encouraged to show loyalty to "their" teachers, "their" class, "their" school, "their" athletic teams. Such regimentation and institutional loyalty set them in good stead for their later lives as employees.

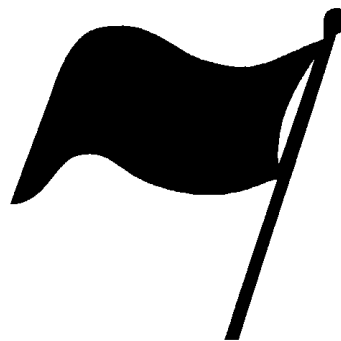
Students are seen as members of groups, not individuals, with developmental needs and goals based on their age and grade, not their personal desires and preferences. Students who are bored with school or can't stand being confined in a classroom are commonly labeled as discipline problems or "diagnosed" with a fake disease like hyperactivity/attention deficit disorder. Children with this diagnosis are then drugged into submission to make them more malleable in the classroom. Same-age groups are all taught the same thing in the same way. Forcing

children to associate with others of the same age, whether they share interests or not, promotes conformity with others in their arbitrary group, instead of individuality and freely chosen friendships and alliances. Students who don't fit in are disciplined and punished by teachers and administrators and/or terrorized and bullied by more compliant "peers."

The disregard in which students are held by the education establishment is demonstrated in many ways. Physical facilities are allowed to deteriorate, doors are removed from toilet stalls, inadequate cooling and heating are provided, and less than nutritious food is provided in cafeterias. Students in Boaz, AZ, were even fed chicken nuggets made from diseased poultry. Out of date and inaccurate textbooks are used, incompetent teachers are hired and promoted, and violent students are allowed to attack their more vulnerable peers. Like prisoners, students are confined in unsanitary, sometimes dangerous, institutions and punished with more intensive incarceration if they rebel. Unlike most prisoners, however, students have done nothing to put themselves in this position besides living in a certain place and being a certain age. It should come as no surprise that so many students leave these places as soon as they are old enough to do so.

Students are routinely denied the due process usually granted to adults accused of "bad" behavior. Zero tolerance policies in regard to guns and drugs in schools result in suspensions of even very young children

for "crimes" such as bringing an inch-and-a-half long gun-shaped medallion to school, pointing a chicken finger at a teacher and saying "pow, pow, pow," or giving a non-prescription pain-killer to a friend. In a particularly outrageous incident, five students in Parsons, KS, were charged with conspiracy to commit murder in December 1999, solely on the basis of a lie told by another student that they were planning to shoot people at school. They were detained for two months and then released into 24-hour adult supervision, despite the fact that their accuser admitted making up the story



### *anarchy in kansas*

is an occasional publication of the Bad Press,  
an anti-government anarchist project,  
and is edited by Joe Peacott.

Individual issues are available for  
postage/SASE.

You can reach Bad Press at:  
PO Box 3682  
Kansas City, KS 66103-0682  
email: [bbrigade@world.std.com](mailto:bbrigade@world.std.com)  
website: [world.std.com/~bbrigade](http://world.std.com/~bbrigade)

in February 2000. The conspiracy charges were not dropped until April 14. However, despite this, the students were barred from returning to school, and administrators advocated barring them for the rest of the school year, because their presence would be “disruptive.” An object lesson in american justice.

children in public schools or not. Attempts to facilitate use of private schools by means of vouchers have been consistently opposed by education bureaucrats, public school teachers, and most politicians, large numbers of whom manage to put their own children in private or better-off suburban public schools. Of course, such vouchers



would increase government control of private schools by setting standards that such schools would have to meet to qualify to receive stolen tax revenues, thereby gradually whittling away at the advantages currently enjoyed by private institutions. Despite their better academic performance and less violent environments, private schools even now are still required to comply with various state rules and regulations which stifle innovation and promote traditional curricula. In most

Many parents, unwilling to sacrifice their children to the public school system, have turned to non-government alternatives. Private schools often provide a better education in basic skills and sometimes a more varied curriculum, at least in part as a result of the need for these schools to compete for paying customers with a “free” public system. Tuition at these institutions, however, is an added, and at times prohibitive, expense for parents who are already forced to pay taxes to support government education, whether they have

private schools, just as in government ones, discipline, conformity, and hierarchy remain the rule.

More and more people are pulling their children totally out of the school system. While education bureaucrats usually require home-schoolers to register with school boards and/or submit curricula, parents can sometimes manage to avoid all contact with education authorities and are overlooked by the system. Some home-schoolers are disciplinarians and force their children to follow a strict curriculum. Others,

however, known as deschoolers, completely reject the model of education and teaching, instead promoting self-directed learning. They see the role of parents and other helpers as simply assisting learners when they lack the expertise or experience to learn on their own or in conjunction with their fellow learners. Such children are encouraged to choose friends and associates on the basis of shared desires and interests, regardless of age, sex, color, and so on. Deschooling challenges categories based on shared group characteristics or identities and promotes individuality and mutual aid. Learning is seen as a joint project of all concerned, with the learners choosing the direction of their own development, viewing the mastery of manual skills as just as important as academic pursuits. In this model, learning is completely individualized, with each child seen as a unique person whose progress is not to be constantly compared to that of others or judged according to some developmental model created by “experts.”

The public education system cannot be reformed, any more than other branches of government. It can exist only because the state forces children into schools with its compulsory education laws, confiscates the money to fund them by taxing working people, and confounds the efforts of people to create their own alternatives by insinuating itself into private schools and even the homes of those who reject schools altogether. The only solution for the problems of government schools is to abolish them and all other intrusions by

government into the lives of individuals. And this will only come about with the abolition of government itself.



## Kansas Anarchist History Update

Since writing the article on kansas anarchist history in the last issue of *anarchy in kansas* I have been informed of some other details about anarchists in the state.

Voltaireine deCleyre lived in kansas for about a year, in 1890-1891, to lecture for the Women’s National Liberal Union. She stayed primarily in Enterprise, and tutored and wrote to supplement her lecture fees. It was during this period that she attended the meeting of the Kansas Liberal League in Ottawa.

In addition to the publishing projects mentioned last issue, a journal called *The Gentle Anarchist* was published in Lawrence from 1984-87.

I welcome any additional information about anarchists in kansas that readers can provide.

# CONTRA GRADUALISM

by Wendy McElroy

It is 1858 and you are living in a Northern town. A man has arrived at your door with papers documenting his ownership of a run away slave whom you are sheltering. The slave throws himself at your feet begging to stay while the slave-owner reasons with you. Being philosophically inclined, he comments on the political and social necessity of preserving slavery for the time being. He assures you he is opposed to the institution, but that without it the economy of the South would shrivel and crimes of passion by blacks against whites would abound. Slavery must be phased out. When the black man is educated and able to support himself, then he will be freed.

If you reply, "There is no moral or practical consideration that overrides this man's right to his own body," you are an abolitionist.

If you reply, "I am opposed to slavery, but the consequences of immediately ending it are disastrous; therefore, I return your slave for the transition period," you are a gradualist.

The abolition of slavery was the core issue around which libertarians of the early nineteenth century rallied. They opposed phasing it out as they would have opposed phasing out rape. Both are moral abominations on which the only proper position is immediate cessation; that is, as

fast as is humanly possible. A core issue around which modern libertarians must rally is the abolition of the state, as fast as is humanly possible.

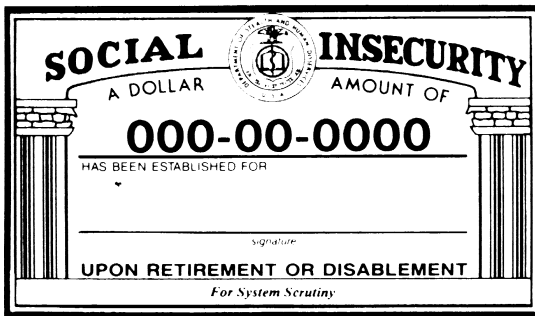
Libertarianism is the political philosophy based on the principle of nonaggression. Every human being is a self owner with inalienable rights. And gradualism is inconsistent with the moral foundation of libertarianism.



Before proceeding, it is useful to distinguish gradualism as a policy from gradualism as a fact of reality. This latter form of gradualism says that, try as you

may, it takes time to implement ideas. The transition to a libertarian society would not—because it could not—occur overnight. This is the nature of temporal reality in which we live. If this is all that is meant by gradualism—if it means ‘as fast as possible’—then there is no quarrel between so called ‘gradualists’ and ‘abolitionists’ within the movement.

This is not the formulation of gradualism with which abolitionists are concerned. When abolitionists say that unjust laws ought to be abolished immediately, the “ought” is a moral ought, and “immediately” means no more than as fast as possible.



Abolitionists do not deny reality; they simply insist that - as a political policy, individual rights must be given priority over all other moral and practical considerations. Libertarian abolitionists of the nineteenth century realized that the cessation of slavery would take time, but their message was that the deliberate continuation of slavery as a policy could not be justified. They demanded abolition - no “ifs,” “ands,” or “buts.”

Those libertarians of the “ifs,” “ands,” or “buts” camp maintain that, in some cases, libertarianism ought to favor the gradual phasing out of unjust laws and agencies rather than pushing for immediate abolition, even if that immediate abolition is possible. A commonly cited example is the modern version of slavery—taxation. If taxes were to cease abruptly, it is claimed, the consequences upon those who have paid into social security would be calamitous. Therefore taxes must be phased out.

[For the sake of this analysis, I will label the foregoing position as “explicit” gradualism and introduce the concept of “implicit” gradualism later.]

The defining aspect of explicit gradualism is the answer it gives to the key question: Could it ever be too soon to eliminate an unjust law or agency? The abolitionist gives an unqualified “no.” If the gradualist does not answer “yes,” he answers “maybe.” Taxation is theft but some people might starve if it ceases abruptly. (Please note that I am not denigrating concern for starving people, but merely rejecting the use of force—and particularly governmental force—to solve this problem.)

Here the explicit gradualist is not denying that taxation violates rights; he is claiming that there is a “social good” which has higher priority than individual rights. Since he cannot justify coercion with reference to freedom itself (unless the word is radically redefined), he justifies the willful continuation of theft by posing a dilemma of some kind. Abolition of

government laws would result in social chaos; thus, we need a “transition” period during which deliberate rights violations would continue.



The myth of the transition period accomplishes at least two things. It converts libertarianism from a personal philosophy and obligation that should be consistently lived on a day-to-day basis into a symbolic light at the end of a tunnel. Thus, libertarians might have to advocate and participate in the violation of rights in order to humanely achieve a society where no compromise of rights is tolerated. To the insightful Gandhi objection that “The means are the ends in progress,” the explicit gradualist might well answer with a quote from Lenin: “You have to break a few eggs to make an omelette.” Is it necessary to point out that “eggs” is a metaphor for “heads”?

The second accomplishment is a slight of hand. By posing the transition period, gradualism is suddenly shifted into a strategic rather than a moral question. Gradualism is simply a matter of getting from here to there.

Abolitionists answer: on the contrary, however, gradualism is a matter of whether libertarians will sanction the violation of rights as a strategy. As a libertarian, it is not within your range of discretion to deliberately violate the rights of any person in any case. It is forbidden, without qualification, by the fundamental principle of the philosophy. You may decide to aggress anyway, but you cannot aggress in the name of libertarian theory. Logic forbids you that option.

The only possible avenue of escape from this contradiction is to compromise the non-aggression principle by watering it down to read: “The initiation of force, is wrong except when it is necessary to preserve “social order,” or “...when it is politically expedient,” or “...when a libertarian politician says so.”

If the non-aggression principle is given priority then the only libertarian approach to unjust laws and agencies is that they must be abolished as soon as is humanly possible; that is, abolitionism.

Other problems with explicit gradualism are worth mentioning. For those who favor libertarian politicians (I do not) it is important to have a standard by which to judge the effectiveness and sincerity of libertarian office-holders, If, at the end of four years, your politician has



accomplished little, he can always contend, "The time was not ripe." Since gradualism has no objective standards, it is a blank check for inactivity and compromise.

A more fundamental problem is the "reductio ad absurdum" of gradualism. Once you admit the principle of subordinating rights to a social good, there is no way to draw the line. If my rights are violated by libertarians to compensate others for injustice (not receiving social security, for example), why should the same principle not be applied to me? Surely that injustice done to me should go rectified by violating the rights of the coming generation. This vicious, antilibertarian doctrine fosters an infinite regress of injustice. As William Lloyd Garrison expressed it, "Gradualism in theory is perpetuity in practice." The only way to stop injustice is to stop injustice.

Nevertheless, gradualists might reply that a minimal tax would be a small injustice compared to the greater one of depriving old people of social security. But it is not clear what standard is being used here. Are we to trust a "gut" reaction that it is better for many people to be deprived of a little than for few to be deprived of a great deal? Even if one could be judged less unjust, trying to fit either one into a libertarian framework would be pounding a square peg of injustice into the round hole of liberty. And if it could be demonstrated that I have had more stolen from me through taxation than have many of those on social security, could they be forced to

compensate me for that greater injustice? The dismal fact is that everyone has had money stolen by the government; the goal of libertarianism is to end that process, not to dilute or redirect it.



**"One should be wary of strong drink. It can make you shoot at tax collectors . . . and miss."**

**- Robert Heinlein**

---

Let me now introduce the concept of "implicit" gradualism, which uses a different approach. The implicit gradualist might well agree with everything written up to this point, but he would advocate gradualism with regard to spreading libertarian ideas. Thus, libertarian writers and speakers should present issues on a piecemeal basis without ever stating the goal of abolition or the wider libertarian context. Thus, a libertarian should call for decreased taxation without revealing the goal of no taxation. "Taxation is theft" is replaced with a statement that you "have the right to keep more of what you earn."

This is gradualism by concealment - a concealment that is justified as a strategic maneuver to facilitate agreement. After all, if we unload the entire libertarian ideology onto people, they will shrink from its

radicalism. They are not ready to hear abstract discussions of justice and natural rights. The implicit gradualists may swear—in private to fellow libertarians—that they favor abolitionism, but they are unwilling to be publicly honest about it.

It is important to point out that it is indeed sometimes inappropriate to bring up the wider framework of libertarianism. In discussing drugs, for example, it is probably inappropriate to divert the conversation in order to show how self ownership also applies to abortion or labor reform. This is different in kind, however, from actively avoiding the fundamental principles...of refusing to extend them when they are appropriate. And it is also different from misstating a libertarian position to dull its radical edge.

This policy of calculated misstatement is one of the most unpleasant contributions that electoral politics has made to libertarian theory. Unlike explicit gradualism, however, implicit gradualism does not violate rights. It is more a matter of personal integrity and strategy. It is simply lying by omission.

In defense of such lying it must be admitted that, since no one has a natural right to hear only the truth, lying is non-aggressive. I contend, however, that it is counter to strict personal integrity and is abysmally poor strategy.

Strategically, the first question to consider is whether or not there is a distinctively libertarian point of view to political issues. Libertarianism consists of more than advocating certain repeals and

reform; it consists of advocating them for a specific reason. Individual political reforms come with no ideological tag identifying them as libertarian, socialist, conservative or liberal. Both conservatives and libertarians attack big government and taxes. Both liberals and libertarians call for pro-choice abortion laws...or, at least, they should. The point is that unless a libertarian gives the reason for a specific proposal, there is nothing intrinsically libertarian about it. If, however, he stands up and states, "I oppose all taxation as theft and support any reduction of taxes as a step toward that end," then his proposal has a libertarian context.



Secondly, the benefits of consistency and openness must not be underrated. Once people understand and accept the principle of non-aggression, they begin the long slide

of applying it to specific issues and concluding that everything from roads to a court system could be handled on a voluntary basis. Communicate the ideology well and the issues will follow; the adverse is not necessarily true.

Third, gradualists claim that libertarianism is too radical to appeal to large numbers of people. But the problem here is not whether we wish to appear radical; the problem is that we are radical

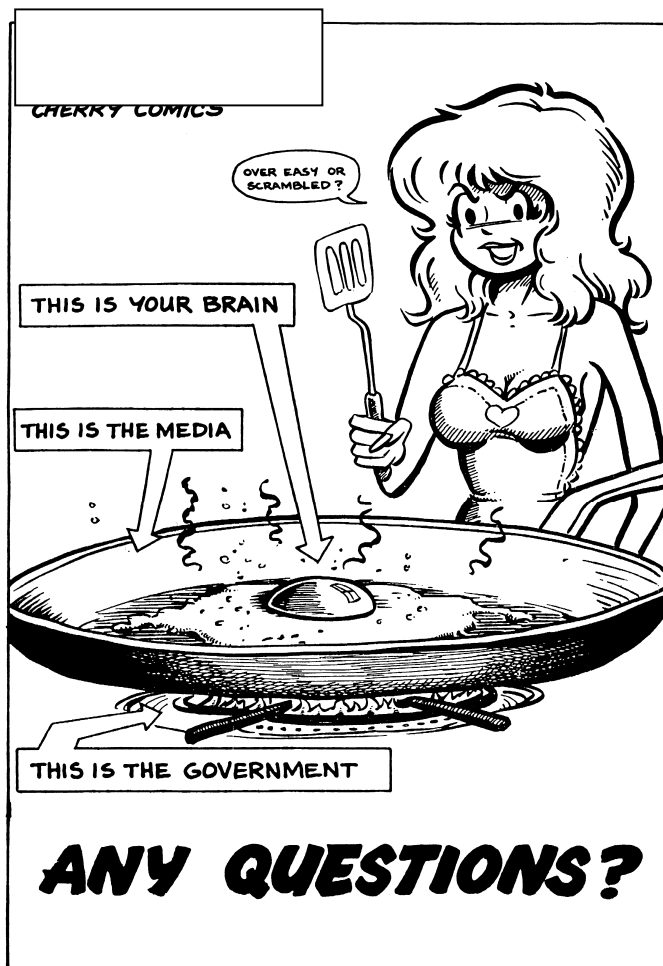
and don't want to admit it. At least, not publicly. The issue is whether our radicalism will be viewed as a strong-point or as an political idiot cousin to be locked in the attic and not discussed.

My final objection is that I suspect many implicit gradualists, are simply confessing their inability to communicate radical, abstract ideas well and then making a strategy out of this failure. The enormous appeal and influence of Ayn Rand and

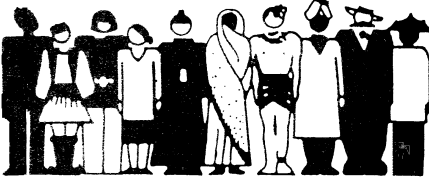
Thomas Szasz proves that radical ideas can be presented reasonably and effectively. They can be presented with passion, humor, understatement, allegory, compassion and anger. The range of presentation is as endless as the personalities of those who espouse the principles.

The alternative to a fanatic, railing abolitionist is not a wishy-washy, evasive gradualist. It is a reasoned, knowledgeable abolitionist who communicates radical ideas effectively.

If libertarians do not present clear and explicit libertarian ideas, who will? These ideas may be accepted or rejected, but they will live or die on the basis of what they are instead of what they are not. It would be tragic if the one clear voice for freedom in our time did not have enough confidence in itself to speak up without apology.



## Available from Bad Press



### Against Separatism

Joe Peacott, editor

\$4 (postpaid) u.s.a., canada, mexico

\$5 (postpaid) everywhere else



### Individualism Reconsidered

Joe Peacott

\$4 (postpaid) u.s.a., canada, mexico

\$5 (postpaid) everywhere else



### What is Mutualism?

Richard Garner

\$1 (postpaid) u.s.a

\$1.50 (postpaid) canada, mexico

\$2.25 (postpaid) everywhere else



*"Never has the individual been so completely delivered up to a blind collectivity, and never have people been less capable, not only of subordinating their actions to their thoughts, but of even thinking. Such terms as oppressors and oppressed, the idea of classes - all that sort of thing is near to losing all meaning, so obvious are the impotence and distress of all people in the face of the social machine, which has become the machine for breaking hearts and crushing spirits, a machine for manufacturing irresponsibility, stupidity, corruption, slackness and above all, dizziness."*

**-Simone Weil**