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Frontiersman

Facing the truth, however great the cost.

September 2011

Letters to the Editor

Dear Sam:

I don't have anything to say about the article on the first page [*Signaling for a U-Turn, August 2011, page 1*], but rereading the article on property and theft [*Losers Weepers, August 2011, page 2*] brought some questions to

my mind. Early in the article, you mention the possibility that someone might simply claim some unoccupied land, and defend it by force. Is that situation really the same as theft? I grant that force is involved in both cases, but assuming that the land had never before been claimed or occupied, (a big assumption) then is it possible that the initial claimant has a more valid claim than anyone who takes it from him by force? Also, if this is taken as true, then it might be possible, although extremely difficult, to trace back some legitimate ownership of some land. Another question, perhaps outside of the scope of the article, is: How does the concept of ownership arise? It seems to me that no one would think to claim ownership of land, if that idea was not present in the person's culture. Is it possible that notions of property ownership are so linked to specific cultures that there can be no valid extrapolation between cultures?

Could land be owned by some person or group merely as a result of occupation, without any conscious knowledge of property ownership?

—Sir Donald

I'll try to address your questions and comments in the order in which you presented them.

Consider the people who lived on the Great Plains prior to the arrival of white men on this continent. Those people didn't permanently occupy any particular piece of land but they used all of it. Their unobstructed access to the land was necessary for their survival or, at the very least, for the continuation of their culture. When white men moved onto the land, then the survival of the people who previously lived there was threatened, even though they didn't occupy

specific pieces of the land. When those people tried to defend their use of the land, they were deemed to be hostile and they were killed. I believe that such appropriation of such unoccupied land is every bit as much an instance of theft as if the land had already been parceled into lots and covered with strip malls.

Just because a piece of land appears to be unoccupied, that doesn't mean that it isn't relevant to somebody's survival, even if the land is only a watershed. Whether or not any particular bit of land was necessary to somebody's survival when it was most recently stolen would be difficult to know. I doubt if anybody who ever moved onto unoccupied land bothered to verify that it was unused before he stole it.

Regarding your comments about the concept of ownership, I believe that the idea is inherent in human nature. Grabbing things is one of the first activities of small children. You don't have to teach them to steal toys from one another. You try to teach them not to do so. The notions of ownership and theft spring unbidden to the human mind, from toddlers and their pacifiers to emperors and their realms. The ideas are inherent in us.

Regarding your question about the conscious knowledge of ownership, I believe that people are aware of their personal interest in their personal possessions. In some societies, people might not have much in the way of personal possessions but I doubt if that excludes the notion from their awareness.

You used the two terms land and property, in your message, as if they're synonyms. That might not be accurate. Property is a difficult word to define. In Black's Law Dictionary (Fifth Edition, 1979), the definition is almost two pages long and mentions 20 different classifications of property. More important, however, is certain information that's found in Bouvier's Law Dictionary, from 1889. Bouvier defined property not as the thing itself but as the right and interest that a man has in the thing. That makes the definition more confusing to me, and seems a little silly, but it is preliminary to the really important part of Bouvier's definition, quoted next. →

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All things are not the subject of property [sic]: the sea, the air, and the like cannot be appropriated; every one may enjoy them, but he has no exclusive right to them....

Parenthetically, note the following definitions of appropriate (the verb).

APPROPRIATE.... *to take to one's self as one's own: to set apart for a purpose....*

—The American Dictionary of the English Language (1899)

appropriate.... *3: to take or make use of without authority or right....*

—Merriam-Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary (2011)

The two definitions are typical. The idea of a lack of authority or right seems to have entered the definition sometime in the late 1960s or early 1970s. It's interesting to note that appropriate (the adjective) means suitable, compatible, fitting, or proper. The language can be very confusing.

Regardless of Bouvier's clumsy grammar (he should have said "Not all things are...." instead of saying "All things are not...."), it's clear that he regarded some things as being excluded from the possibility of being property.

Defined as simply as I can define it, property is anything that can be owned or, maybe more accurately, anything that is owned. Whether or not land is property, or ever can be property, is a point that I'm calling into question in this discussion. I'm suggesting that land is in the same realm as "the sea, the air, and the like...." in Bouvier's view of things. I suggest that land isn't property and that it never can be property.

—editor

Sam

Re: "Losers, Weepers"

The first paragraph of your article leaves me confused.

Are you trying to say that land can never be properly and legitimately owned? (1)

Was not some land in North America unowned and unused at one time? (2)

Even if we grant that certain pre-historic native American Indians owned and occupied certain portions of North America, were there not other parts of the continent that were not claimed and/or used? (3)

Is it not possible that someone could have claimed and used some of that unclaimed/unowned land in North America? (4)

Would such ownership have constituted theft? (5)

If so, who was the original owner from whom such unowned/unused land was stolen? (6)

How does this tie in with sentence # 2 of your first paragraph to the effect that "The best possible scenario for acquisition of land is that it was unoccupied when the thief took possession of it"? (7)

If the land was unused/unowned, then the first person to use and take possession of that land would not be a thief, but rather a legitimate owner. (8)

Do you agree or disagree? (9)

I've numbered my sentences so you can easily respond to them.

Sincerely,

—Carl; Gramling, South Carolina

1. If we believe that the land is legitimately owned then we must necessarily admit in consequence that stolen land can be transformed into legitimately owned land. Such an admission introduces contradictions into the definitions. It corrupts the meaning of legitimacy, as it applies to land ownership. I don't like the alternatives to which I'm forced. I'd prefer that land could be legitimately owned and that legitimate had the meaning that we want it to have. The problem is that, given the origins of land ownership, I can't find any rational way to resolve the contradictions. Thus, either land can't possibly be legitimately owned or legitimately owned land can just as legitimately be stolen again.

2. When white men began to occupy this continent, there were an estimated ten million people already living here. There wasn't any unused land. The people who were already living here were using all of it.

3, 4, and 5. Where do you suppose that such theoretically unused land might have been located? The uppermost rock on Pike's Peak? Some remote bog in the Everglades? If the whites had claimed such bits of unused land, does it really matter? The fact is that the whites took the entire continent, whether any part of it was unused by the previous inhabitants or not. If there was a lost fragment somewhere that the previous inhabitants weren't using, then how is that relevant to the issue of the land theft that occurred?

6, 7, 8, and 9. One of the points that I'm trying to make is that the land doesn't have to be owned, in the sense of being real estate, in order for it to be necessary to the survival of the →

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people who're using it. They don't even have to occupy it in order for it to be necessary to them. The Sioux people, for example, didn't stay in one place for more than a few days at a time before they moved on. They didn't own the land. They didn't permanently occupy any particular piece of it but they used all of it. When the land was occupied and fenced by the whites, then the Sioux people couldn't survive there anymore. Many whites might not think that the land was stolen from the Sioux people. Many whites might not think that the white settlers were land thieves. If so, then the Sioux people don't agree on that point. Neither do I. The land was stolen.

—editor

Dear Sam, Greetings

Thank you so much for *Frontiersman*....

That MADD [*Signaling for a U-Turn, August 2011, page 1*] is allowed to get away with and is supported by the media, is proof positive that both are controlled by the Money People as a control on people. No other conclusion is possible. Same goes for the IRS! No dissent, no discussion! What we say goes. Which is one reason the "Gov't" went after the "Liberty Dollar" people — old Ben Franklin did some "colonial script" and Lincoln & Kennedy were assassinated due to "debt free" currency. So, until

"Amerislaves" awaken to the real solution to wealth & prosperity, they will forever be subject to crafty tyrants bent on usurping their power, & "we" cannot be called a free nation....

Well friend, the political manure is getting too deep for me, so I'm right behind you in the "quitting" dept. just to be free.

In Freedom!

—a prisoner

I suggest that a good way to start learning about the Money People, as the above writer refers to them, is to read my essay *Money, available on Pharos*. The essay makes a good introduction to a body of knowledge that's documented in various of my other associated essays. So far as I'm aware, that knowledge isn't otherwise available all in one place.

The so-called Money People aren't a new phenomenon. The Knights Templar were such people almost 1000 years ago. I've heard occasional narrators of one documentary or another speculate about how the Templars got to be so rich. Probably the main reason that Philip IV of France turned against them in 1307 was that he owed them such a large debt. His destruction of the Templars solved that problem for him. So, how did the Templars get to be so rich? There isn't any mystery about that at all. They got rich by becoming bankers. —editor

Smitten With Embarrassment Department (Seldom Used)

Sam Aurelius Milam III

While I was writing the article *Signaling for a U-Turn*, presented on page 1 of the August issue, I had occasion to consult the referenced article, *How Mad is MADD? It's Insane!*, in the February 1997 issue. To my chagrin, I noticed that, in the footnotes of the referenced article, I'd cited my sources as the *NBC Nightly News With Tom Brokaw*. Apparently, for all of those years, nobody noticed the error, thereby missing an opportunity to accuse me of making a Freudian Slip, although it was more likely just a typo. A quick check with one of my search

engines revealed yet another occurrence of the same error. While referring to the same news report in *Victimless Crime?* on page 1 of the July 2000 issue, I made the same error. It's an interesting but probably meaningless coincidence that both instances of the error occurred in articles with titles that end with punctuation. It's rare for me to end the title of one of my articles with punctuation because that makes citing the article kind of clumsy. Anyway, I'm twice smitten with embarrassment. In both cases, the cite ought to have been the *NBC Nightly News With Tom Brokaw*, not the *NBC Nightly News With Tom Brokaw*. ¶

No Vacancy

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by David, of Idaho Falls, Idaho.

A college drama group presented a play in which one character would stand on a trapdoor and announce, "I descend into hell!" A stagehand below would then pull a rope, the trapdoor would open, and the character would plunge through. The play was well received.

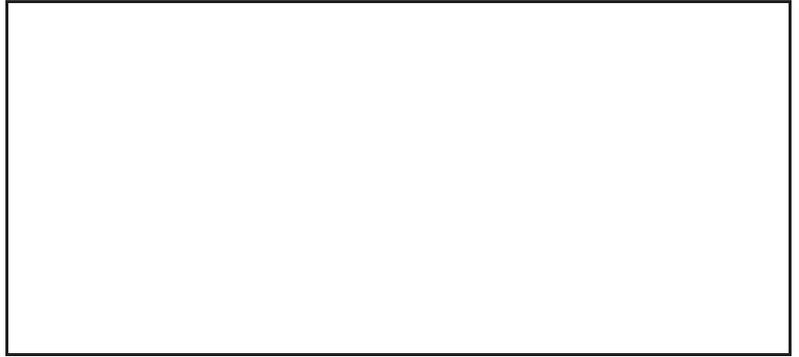
When the actor playing the part became ill, another actor who was quite overweight took his place. When the substitute actor announced, "I descend into hell," the stagehand pulled the rope. The substitute actor began his plunge but became hopelessly stuck. No amount of tugging from below could make him descend. One student in the balcony jumped up and yelled, "Hallelujah! Hell is full!" ∞

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Nation in Distress

When good intentions become an excuse for meddling then they are no longer good intentions.



Acknowledgments

My thanks to the following: SantaClara Bob; Lady Jan the Voluptuous; my mother; and Dewey and Betty. —editor

Professional License

Sam Aurelius Milam III

Q: What do psychiatrists' receptionists wear under their dresses?

A: Freudian slips. ☞

Kids Are Quick

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Sir Donald the Elusive.

Teacher: Now, Simon, tell me frankly, do you say prayers before eating?

Simon: No sir, I don't have to, my mother is a good cook.

Teacher: Clyde, your composition on *My Dog* is exactly the same as your brother's. Did you copy his composition?

Clyde: No, sir. It's the same dog. ∞

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Interesting Facts

Original Source Unknown. Forwarded by Steve, of Mililani, Hawaii. I didn't try to verify any of them.

Q: What's the most popular name for a boat?

A: Obsession.

Q: What do bullet proof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers, and laser printers have in common?

A: They were invented by women.

Q: What is the only food that doesn't spoil?

A: Honey.

Q: On what day are the most collect calls made?

A: Father's Day.

Q: What trivial fact about Mel Blanc, the voice of Bugs Bunny, is the most ironic?

A: Mel Blanc was allergic to carrots.

Q: What's done by 40% of the people at a party?

A: They snoop in the medicine cabinet. ∞

in which you reprint my material.

Submissions — I solicit letters, articles, and cartoons for the newsletter, but I don't pay for them. Short items are more likely to be printed. I suggest that letters and articles be shorter than 500 words but that's flexible depending on space available and the content of the piece.

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