

The Opt-Out Option

There's an old saying, You can't beat city hall. And another that advises, If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. Together, these aphorisms, were they our only guides, would suggest that we recognize we can't defeat the state and its intrinsic domination of society, and therefore that we plunge into the political fray, striving to get as much of the state's loot for ourselves as we can.

There is another alternative, however. It might be called the opt-out option. It is the one that I, along with a few others, have chosen. It is nonviolent and nonconfrontational, although it does not require that one remain silent and comports with one's loud denunciation of the state and its inherent evils. Opting out in this case does not mean "going off the grid" or living in a cave in the wilderness. It means only that one withdraw all noncoerced support, whether in word or in deed, for government as we know it. It means that one violates all unjust state dictates, evades all its requirements and taxes, and in general ignores it to the extent that prudence permits. Opting out is not a type of suicide by state or a species of martyrdom. It simply means walking away from the state and its oppression whenever one can get away with doing so.

If enough people simply opt out, then, as Etienne de la Boetie spelled out clearly back in the mid-sixteenth century, the state crumbles. One need not "beat" city hall to destroy its power; simply stop, in every way possible, propping up its resources and its claims of legitimacy. And in no case should one join the oppressor one cannot beat. Just walk away, and urge others to do likewise. Peace is better than violence; freedom is better than oppression. Don't play the game of mutual plunder via the state. Just walk away from the state, toward justice.