

What Would I Do?



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“One Improved Unit” is an original column appearing sporadically on Monday at Everything-Voluntary.com, by the founder and editor Skyler J. Collins. Archived columns can be found here. OIU-only RSS feed available here.

What would I do, if I lived in a free society, and my neighbor decided to operate a meth lab? What would I do, if I lived in a free society, and my neighbor had kidnapped several women and held them as sex slaves? What would I do, if I lived in a free society, and my neighbor started building a nuclear weapon in his basement? What would I do, if I lived in a free society, and my neighbors wanted to form a government? Ah, the joys of being grilled by statist.

Wrong Questions?

Though these are the types of questions that many an anarchist have been asked by their statist friends and family members, I think that they miss the point of anarchism. Anarchism, at least for me, does not mean “not finding solutions to tough problems,” rather, it means “no rulers.” Are the above hypotheticals realistic? One can imagine so. I think we’ve all heard stories of neighborhood meth labs and sex slaves held for years. But do they require a state, an institution with a territorial monopoly on law enforcement and dispute adjudication, to solve? Is an HOA (homeowners association) with rules prohibiting the above activities (or others) a state? Do states exist to provide security, or does their existence create insecurity?

Wrong Analogies

The hypotheticals above lead statist to argue that forming an HOA with rules, enforced by violence, is akin to the creation of a state. If every property owner agrees to the rules, then where’s the illegitimacy? Because such an HOA-state is a legitimate institution, and every state today, or at least *our* state, began this way, then our dissent is meaningless. We anarchists should just leave.

Interesting reasoning, but flawed throughout. That an HOA, with definitive boundaries and contracting parties, is the same as any state in the world today is easily disproved. No state today was formed in such a way. Every state, including the United State Federal

Government, was created on the basis of “minority rule.” And even had there been a majority of consent, dissenters rights are inalienable. Every ancient and modern state began by conquering, with greater power, dissenters. And further, an HOA is a far cry from a modern state with it’s ever-expanding bureaucracy, imperialistic military, secret surveillance, police, and courts, central banking and legal tender laws, powerless and meaningless constitutions, “Wars on” drugs, poverty, and terror, *et cetera*. HOAs are accountable and naturally limited (by size, power, and resources), states are not.

So, What *Would* I Do?

You may be wondering what any of this has to do with the theme of this column. Well, as this column is about how I’ve improved as a person, as a unit of society, I must answer the hypotheticals above as me, a self-proclaimed voluntaryist. If one of my neighbors decided to operate a meth lab, my first attempted solution would be to gather a few of my other neighbors who likewise felt threatened by this dangerous endeavor and, without arms, knock on his door and try to reason with him. After all, maybe he has a good reason, and we can all come up with a safer place for him to run his meth lab. Failing his cooperation, I would publicize his deviance in the newspaper and talk with local grocers and stores about them cutting off business with him. I would appeal to their profit interest, and if any of them were okay with doing business with a meth lab operator, I would likewise publicize their business practices. Something tells me they’d come around, and sooner or later this neighbor would have a hard time surviving in our community. If for some unlikely reason even that failed to shut down his meth lab, my neighbors and I are well within our rights (self-defense) to use force to shutdown his operation. His complaints, brought to dispute adjudication, would likely fall on deaf ears. I doubt any profit-motivated judge would be willing to pass judgment in his favor.

What about a neighbor holding sex slaves? This situation likewise qualifies as an act of aggression and considering the safety of those in bondage, I would be mindful of how an overt response of force could endanger their lives. In other words, I wouldn’t go in guns blazing a la Waco, Texas. This scenario is a bit harder to predict, but in my opinion it’s likely that we’d find a solution to the problem sooner or later, and with a minimum of casualties.

And the building of a nuclear weapon? Methinks this would be addressed in the same manner as the meth lab. So what about my neighbors wanting to form a government? Considering the culture that would evolve in a free society, I doubt a majority of my neighbors would want to form anything more than an HOA. But had they the might to form an HOA with disagreeable rules, what would I do? I don’t know, but considering that being in *that* position is infinitely greater than I find myself in today, I would employ all the voluntaryist tricks I could think of. Failing those, and after reasonably considering their proposal and still dissenting, I would find another place to live. Is that admitting defeat? In

a way, yes, but in another, no. It would say nothing about the rightness of my principles, but it would say that at some point fighting isn't worth it. While they can take away my liberty, they can't take away my freedom.

Final Thoughts

I think the most important thing when being grilled by statisticians is to keep a sunny disposition. Don't allow them to ruffle your feathers or get you upset. I am getting better at not taking these things too seriously. What the statistician shows by arguing is that despite his claims he does believe in the use of persuasion over force. That's something, if only just a sliver of common ground. Take a hold of it and practice asking the right questions to get the statistician to see the errors in his own logic. That's where I need to improve, personally. And I have enough statistician friends and family members to practice with, but I must remember that being right isn't worth creating resentment or ill-feelings toward one another. Keep it light, keep it happy, keep it peaceful, and I just might change a few minds.