

of personal responsibility than had been known before. These facts account for the American miracle!

There wasn't, for all practical purposes, much statism in this arrangement. Indeed, there was none except for certain compromises or infractions of the American principle, such as slavery and tariffs, which were admitted into the Constitution. But what happened?

THE IDEA PERVERTED

OUR AGENT, government — federal, state, and local, composed of persons not unlike the rest of us — perhaps became tired of performing the merely negative function of defending life and property. Or, perhaps, the citizens reverted to the ideas of their European forebears and called on the agent to do things beyond the defensive function. Regardless of cause, irrespective of whether the agent usurped powers or received additional granted powers, the agent turned the defensive weapons into coercive weapons.

A weapon is a weapon. A gun or a force that can be used to defend life and property can also be used to take life and property. *Statism begins at precisely the point where the defensive function is turned to coercive activity of a positive nature.* Statism begins, for instance, when the state leaves off protecting one's income and begins taking one's income for others. It begins when the state

traffics in *coercive* or *initiated* force instead of sticking to *defensive* or *repellent* force.

Statism is coercion. Coercion (initiated force) is evil in every instance of its application. There are no exceptions.*

A TEST

IF ONE WILL relate what aspects of his life he will willingly concede to another's control, it becomes obvious, in logic and equity, what his views on the limit of the state ought to be. Quite likely he will make only one concession because he will want others to make the same concession to him: the right to defend (repellent force) his life and property against the aggression (coercive force) of another. No person on the face of this earth has any moral right to use other than defensive force against any other person on earth. Rights which we as citizens do not possess cannot properly be delegated to any agency — even the state. The state, then, cannot, in good reason, be in possession of rights that do not inhere in the citizens. For the state to go beyond this is to argue that its extracurricular rights come from somewhere else. Where? From God, as the Divine Right of Kings theory argues?

Here is my own radical belief — radical

*The collection of taxes for purely defensive purposes deserves a more complete treatment than space here permits. Such collection, in my view, does not classify as coercion.