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Un-Licensed - Un-Numbered - Un-Taxed

by Carl Watner
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An example of creeping statism, if there was ever one, is the now widespread use of social security numbers. No one, I daresay could have predicted back in the late 1930s when the program was begun, that 60 years later it would almost be impossible to live and work without such a government identification number. The purpose of this article is to explore the philosophy and efforts of some "conscientious objectors" who prefer to remain individuals rather than embrace a statist system which licenses, numbers, and taxes them in hundreds of ways.

One of the most pervasive ways that government controls us is by regulating our right to travel over the geographic areas they have coercively monopolized. Each of the fifty state governments of the United States has a comprehensive motor vehicle and driver code which governs our movements. Generally, they accomplish this by requiring

1. that every driver of a motorized vehicle be licensed; and
2. that every vehicle traveling upon state roads be registered and tagged.

A citizen cannot claim a right to travel upon roads that his fuel taxes and general tax monies have helped build. The states have created monstrous bureaucracies which have conditioned us into accepting state control over our lives, and which levy and collect extremely large amounts of money in sales and excise taxes, licensing fees (from both driver permits and license tags), and collections from fines and penalties for violations of their so-called laws. In short, the motor vehicle licensing monopoly is big, big, business and because motorized transport has become an integral way of life to us, it becomes extremely difficult to escape the tentacles of the state.

Even the Old Order Amish, a religious group which largely rejects the use of modern automobiles and trucks, find themselves involved with the modern state, much to their displeasure. Though the Amish are not required to have driver's licenses, in at least some areas their horse-drawn buggies must be tagged before they can legally be driven upon state roads. The Amish have also been fighting building codes and permits for decades. In some localities the local licensing authorities even demand that they obtain permits to erect outhouses. Another tenet of their religion looks askance upon insurance. Hence, they refused to become voluntary participants in the federal Social Security program when it was extended to them in the early 1950s. After the seizure and forced sale of some Amish horses and farm implements, the U.S. Congress passed legislation that exempted the Amish from contributions to Social Security. Nevertheless, this did not relieve the Amish from the liability of filing and paying federal income taxes. They are still expected to obtain and use a federal identification number upon their tax returns (though the IRS has a special form for those Amish who refuse to get a Social Security number), and if they employ non-Amish hired-help they still must make payments to the Social Security system on behalf of those employees. So, if an organized and long-recognized religious community, like the Amish, cannot insulate and isolate itself from the statist beast, what are those with voluntarist sentiments to do? What chance is there to remain unlicensed, unnumbered, and untaxed?

Roger Barker, a subscriber to **The Voluntarist**, brought to my attention another approach used by some in the patriot movement, especially in the western part of the United States. One of the patriot groups in which he participated during the 1980s held regular "Right to Travel" meetings. "Many of the regulars had no drivers licenses," though nearly all of them travelled around in registered automobiles. He recalls that George Gordon, one of the patriot leaders who developed a course on the Common Law, once came through town. "He was travelling from Missouri to California in a motor home with 'UKG' plates-United Kingdom of God." George Gordon, like other religious patriots, realized that the church has the authority to license both drivers and vehicles. One group which has

taken the lead in this area is The Embassy of Heaven Church (Postal Service Box 77, Sublimity, Oregon 97385). An Ambassador of the Embassy of Heaven Church has church-issued license plates on his car, a church-issued registration and certificate of title, and a church-issued driver's license.

The pastor of The Embassy of Heaven Church is a man by the name of Paul Revere. Born In 1949, Revere was "reborn" in the mid-1980s, when he began using his new "God-given" name. Two weeks after his state-issued driver's license expired In 1985, he was stopped by the police and hauled to jail because he could not display a driver's license. He was forced to spend 30 days in jail, the maximum time allowed by Oregon law for this 'crime'. The idea for Church license plates was the brainchild of his wife, Rachel, who was stopped five years ago for having no license plates on her Church car. He and his wife, and their two children ages 13 and 10, live on 34 acres owned by the Church. In 1987, Revere issued a "proclamation of land use" declaring that the Church property was exempt from state and county property taxes. In July 1994 the Church faces a showdown when officials from Marion County, Oregon will begin foreclosure proceedings.

As a result of his experiences with the law, Paul Revere and the Embassy of Heaven Church have published two manuals explaining their position. "RENAMED BY HEAVEN is a handbook for those who believe that God is calling them to a new life and a new Identity. It is a practical guide for establishing a new name, given not by men, but by Heaven." LICENSED BY HEAVEN describes how to obtain a Heaven driver's license and Heaven registration plates. So equipped, the church's people have "severed the licensing tie with the world order." Revere also publishes a bimonthly newsletter for \$12.00 yearly. Other related audio and written materials are available.

The Embassy of Heaven Church meets the state on its own grounds. By providing a driver's license, car registration, and tags, the state cannot claim that the driver is not licensed nor has his car untagged. "The only argument left (for the state) is what authority issued the documents." The state's attitude is: "if you don't have a driver's license, don't drive." The church's response is that it "issues driver's licenses under the power and authority given us by Jesus Christ. We have never surrendered the authority to issue driver's licenses to the state. Now when the police stop us and want to see a driver's license, we give them one." If the police and the courts refuse to accept their driver's license, they have to deny the Kingdom of Heaven and the right of the church to be regulated by a higher authority. "Who is the state to sit in judgement over a Church document?" "When the state charges that the Church license is invalid, they have entered into the Church's affairs." The state "cannot make determinations on the validity of licenses issued from other jurisdictions." There is no law that says a church cannot issue licenses, tags, or registrations. As the Embassy of Heaven Church asserts, "The state cannot decide what the church can and cannot do. That is outside their

realm."

In order to understand the Embassy of Heaven Church approach to licensing matters, one must comprehend the concepts of "residency" and "jurisdiction". Typically a state will define a resident of that state as a person who "engages in gainful employment" in the state or who remains in the state "for a consecutive period of six months or more regardless of the domicile of the person." The church takes issue with the state definition of "residency" because therein lies the key to the state's jurisdiction. The church insists that "residency is spiritual not territorial," and that being in the state's territory does not necessarily make one a resident of that state, even if one lives there for more than six months at a time. The church points out that diplomatic officials and ambassadors live in foreign countries for long periods of time. They do not become "residents of the state" because their allegiance remains with the government which they represent. Similarly, those whose allegiance rests with Jesus Christ and the Embassy of Heaven Church are not subject to the jurisdiction of the government of the land in which they reside. They are subjects of Christ, not any worldly government. The church's position is that you are the final authority on where you reside and where you put your allegiance. No state can decide this for you, unless you let them.

The purpose of having church-issued licensing documents is primarily to eliminate contention, not to satisfy a government requirement that drivers and vehicles have them. The church wants to "eliminate controversy so that its Ambassadors can go on doing the Lord's business" without being hassled by the police or encountering hostile public opinion. "A Heaven driver's license is almost identical to a state driver's license. It has the words, DRIVER LICENSE printed across the top of the card. It has your name and signature. It has your personal data-eye color, hair color, sex, height and weight. There's even a" place for a mug shot if you want one. No driving test is required. On the application for a driver's license there is a statement that says, "I declare that I am competent to drive a motor vehicle." Nor is there any need for commercial insurance. "Car insurance is a requirement for state residents." The church explains that those it licenses are residents of Heaven, and therefore not required to carry any insurance. The church does, however, add that God requires that we be responsible for our actions. "If we hurt someone or damage property," then restitution should be made to the best of one's ability.

In RENAMED BY HEAVEN, Paul Revere explains that, "Before America became a socialist state, births were recorded in the Family Bible. Parents asked God to bless their children; the children were dedicated to God. But now Americans have forgotten God; they look to the state as their Creator, Lord and Protector." Consequently, nearly all Americans today are tied to the state through state-issued birth certificates. Without such a registration form it is impossible to obtain a Social Security number, a driver's license, passport, voter registration card, even open a bank account or cash a check. A state birth certificate effectively makes us a creature of the state because we are dependent upon that document

to receive State-granted privileges. Nearly all the members of the Embassy of Heaven Church had state-issued birth certificates issued when they were born. What have they done to erase this stigma?

The Embassy of Heaven Church's answer to this problem is not to rescind one's original birth certificate (not being a contract it is not subject to rescission), but rather to simply change one's name without involving the state. The new name simply supersedes and cancels the old one. It is an established legal practice that "a man may change his family name freely without court authorization if he is willing to communicate the name change to all those with whom he conducts personal and business transactions." This Common Law method of name change is widely recognized in this country, though the state loses a measure of control if people don't use the courts to obtain a name change. The church's position coincides with the Common Law: "You are the final authority on your name. No man can tell you what your name is. Your name is between you and God."

Regardless of what one thinks of the church's approach to licensing, it in fact displays a very voluntarist attitude in its renunciation of all ties with state and federal governments. The Embassy of Heaven Church realizes that asking a court to legalize your name change is recognizing its jurisdiction over you. Hence it rejects that route. In a recent church newsletter (July-August 1993), Paul Revere wrote that, "There is no salvation in the courts at any level. ... if ... we renounce all ties with state and federal governments, we may lose our loved ones, our possessions, and possibly" go to jail and even lose our lives. He further admonishes adversaries of the state to never build a defense in court. "If you do, you have consented to the decision-making power of the court. ... You are better off getting a contempt of court than to participate in their proceedings. Do not let them try you because it is none of their business. ... They want you to believe in their system and submit yourself to the way they want to do things." Just because they have the guns and the police does not make them right.

The difference between the voluntarist approach and that of the Embassy of Heaven Church is that the church relies upon the Christian religion as its bulwark in resisting the State. Only those who give their allegiance to Jesus Christ are eligible to use the Embassy of Heaven Church documents and procedures. Church doctrine effectively prevents all non-Christians from seeking spiritual freedom since non-Christians do not accept Christ into their lives. Voluntarists, on the other hand, believe that "all mankind is one;" that is, the New Testament dictum to "seek the truth and the truth shall make you free" applies to all men and women, not just Christians. Every individual person regardless of his/her religion has ownership rights over his/her own mind and body, and to that property which he/she justly acquired. Freedom is not just limited to those of the Christian faith because freedom is an attitude of mind, a recognition that you control yourself, rather than letting some outside authority dictate your actions. In fact, there are some Christians who

would use the government to enforce their view of the world upon others.

Whereas the Church says its members are not residents of the state, thus escaping its jurisdiction, the voluntaryist says that the state should have no jurisdiction over any one at all. Residency has nothing to do with the matter. The state is a coercive institution, completely at odds with the moral laws that decry thievery, slavery and murder. Evil in any form should not be legitimized, so the voluntaryist refuses to grant validity to the state's claim of jurisdiction, even over residents. As far as licensing goes, the most the voluntaryist will grant is that the owner of a roadway is the proper licensing authority (The voluntaryist does not consider the state the proper owner of the roads because the roads are built with stolen tax monies). Why should the state, the Embassy of Heaven Church, or any other non-road owning entity be able to license vehicles and drivers on roads which they do not own? In claiming that the church is just as legitimate a licensing authority as the state, the church evades the real issue: On what grounds does the state act as a licensing authority? The Church is also at work on issuing its own passports, rather than saying that the state has no right to demand travel documents.

Voluntaryists believe in challenging the state head-on, yet they and other conscientious objectors share a common philosophical insight with the members of the church: might does not make right. The state rests on might: therefore it should be rejected. Without coercive governments, many people would surely remain un-numbered, un-licensed, and un-taxed. What the church would do about licensing if the state were to disappear is its own decision. The important thing is that it leave us alone, and supports itself by voluntary means. Like other voluntary institutions, it will then receive our praise for living by the voluntary principle, even if we do not choose to personally endorse it by becoming a member.