

have non-material incentives (see list of examples again). Nor is theft a form of profit; that is too much like taxes, best left to the legitimized thieves.

What's in it for you?

Counter-economics includes that which you need to do or want to do; the study of it increases your chances of "getting away with it." Working with other counter-economists preferentially reduces both your risks. Networking with other counter-economists increases your information, contacts, trading partners, and so on.

Understanding what you are doing and refining that knowledge, and increasing your data and expanding it to ever greater areas of your life, gives you — not the State — ultimate control over your own life. That is the definition of freedom.

What's in it for our Movement?

As more people consciously convert their work and leisure to the Counter-Economy, the State loses both control and sustenance, like a vampire losing blood and victims. The self-conscious counter-economy is called The Agora (and the libertarian/counter-economists are called agorists). The stateless society which results is historically known as Anarchy. And the final, violent attempt by the losing statists to cling to power is called a counter-revolution. (Revolution is the earlier, peaceful refusal of people to be ruled.)

By these definitions, the Movement of the Libertarian Left is an alliance of sovereign individuals building a revolutionary agorist cadre. We are not content to await a slow, haphazard drift toward a free society; many are being oppressed, plundered, and murdered by the State. By accelerating the movement towards freedom, we save lives and property of many, including, of course, ourselves and those we love. So we take *action!* Give us Agora! Anarchy! Action!

This brochure was originally written and published for MLL by the late Samuel Edward Konkin III. This new edition has been minimally edited by Wally Conger.

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**MOVEMENT OF THE
LIBERTARIAN LEFT**

Agora • Anarchy • Action!

Counter- Economics:

what it is, how it works



What is counter-economics?

The Counter-Economy is the sum of all non-aggressive Human Action which is forbidden by the State. Counter-economics is the study of the Counter-Economy and its *practices*. The Counter-Economy includes the free market, the Black Market, the “underground economy,” all acts of civil and social disobedience, all acts of forbidden association (sexual, racial, cross-religious), and anything else the State, at any place or time, chooses to prohibit, control, regulate, tax, or tariff. The Counter-Economy excludes all State-approved action (the “White Market”) and the Red Market (violence and theft *not* approved by the State).

A counter-economist is either a student of counter-economics or, most often, a practitioner. To some extent, *all* of us are counter-economic. It is impossible to obey all government laws and edicts (many are contradictory) and be alive. (It is also forbidden to *die* without State permission.)

People practicing counter-economics need not be aware of what they are doing or the full implications of their acts; in fact, throughout history, most have not been. “Aboveground,” a gun-runner (in his respectable identity) may support statist attacking drug smugglers, and a feminist midwife may vote to repress CB-using truckers who may contribute to crackdowns on illegal aliens. But “underground,” a Bible smuggler in Turkey who dodges into a shadowy doorway and runs into a prostitute will not suddenly summon the police — and vice versa.

Those who believe that counter-economic practice is *moral* — that is, that the State has no right to prohibit or interfere with non-coercive acts of any kind — are called libertarians.

The usual definition of the State (involuntary government) is “the monopoly of legitimized coercion.” (Not *legitimate*, that needs proof.) The State does not *and cannot* control and monitor everyone all the time. That is the same as saying that the Counter-Economy will be with us as long as the State is.

Should the State cease to exist, the Counter-Economy would simply be The Economy.

Other names for practicing counter-economists (other than black marketeers) are

- Tax evader, tax rebel, tax resister;
- Smuggler (of Bibles to Saudi Arabia, drugs to New York, or humans to California);
- Trucker convoys;
- Pornographers, prostitutes, procurers, and other sexual entrepreneurs;
- Gold bugs, food hoarders, windfall profiteers, and others who refuse to believe official economic mysticism;
- Sanctuary-giving churches, civil-disobedient Witnesses, underground railroads;
- Midwives, feminists using their services;
- Gun nuts, i.e., owners of weapons prohibited by the State;
- *Samizdat* publishers, underground dissidents, artists of forbidden/unapproved art;
- Health nuts, i.e., those who take, produce, or market nourishment unapproved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or its equivalent elsewhere;
- White-collar “criminals,” i.e., ordinary businesspersons who choose not to obey an uneconomic regulation (non-violently);
- Barterers who fail to report transactions;
- Violators of racist pass laws *and* violators of forced integration laws;
- Anyone who pays a child to work at all;
- Illegal immigrants, refugees, and workers;
- Students on campus committing *any* acts not permitted by the administration;
- Anyone who has *ever* smoked a joint, even if he regretted it (as when running for office);
- Anyone who has ever committed *any* sex act except the missionary position with one’s *legal* spouse in one’s *legal* home (most states);

• Drivers in some states who do not run in front of their cars with lanterns so as not to scare horses; and many others. Did you find yourself on the list?

How counter-economics works

Suppose you can make \$10,000 for each shipment (or whatever counter-economic act), and you can perform ten a month. Once a month, someone in your line gets arrested. You have 23 competitors. Half are convicted, half of them lose all their appeals and are forced to pay a fine of half a million dollars and spend six months in jail.

In a year, you would make \$1,200,000. In two years, you could be caught, on the average, once. You would lose half a year of production, so you only make \$1,800,000 for the two-year period and have to pay \$500,000 of that in fines. At the end of two years, you would walk away free with \$1,300,000. Or you could spend some of that on lawyers and only get convicted once every eight years, trading \$100,000 in lawyers’ fees for an additional \$225,000/year ($\$1,200,000 \times 8 = \$9,600,000 - \$500,000 - \$100,000 = \$9,000,000 \div 8 = \$1,125,000/\text{year}$ as opposed to \$900,000/year).

In all counter-economic businesses, some get caught “more than their share” and are driven from the market. Those who are best at beating the State’s enforcers in that market thrive and multiply. (Almost everyone is good in *some* market, and losers in one area switch to one they are better at.)

The above description is true in its general outline for the entire Counter-Economy. Some people are willing to risk greater incarceration, or even death (storekeepers selling apples above the controlled price were shot in the streets in 1949 China and other places at other times); some people are not. The degree of adventure varies, but the principle of counter-economics does not:

trade risk for profit.

That speaks all languages by all colors and creeds. Not all profit is monetary; many