

ever, possess such power. The competitive marketplace possesses real checks and balances, which make widespread corruption impossible. After offering an often eloquent explanation as to how markets can act as a disciplining force on government, Millman should understand that markets, operating within a sound system of property rights, discipline themselves.

In the end, the ability of the government to do substantial economic evil far outstrips that of the individual. Even with the checks provided by financial markets, as explained in *The Vandals' Crown*, government misdeeds continue, with markets, the economy, and individuals paying the price. This should have been Mr. Millman's closing caveat. □

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## Shake-Down: How the Government Screws You From A to Z

by James Bovard

Viking • 1995 • 141 pages • \$14.95

Reviewed by William H. Peterson

**I**tem: A federal program routinely subsidizes welfare families living in oceanfront apartments in upscale La Jolla, California.

Item: The Food and Drug Administration refuses to approve a machine that gives CPR to heart attack victims because the victims cannot give their informed consent.

Item: The Federal Highway Administration proposed a special waiver for the disabled to allow truck drivers to be qualified to drive even if they were blind in one eye and had weak vision in the other.

The above items are gleaned from this exposé of overweening, inept, ham-fisted government, prodding James Bovard to ask: Has our government run amok?

Good question, and one put forth by the author of *Lost Rights: The Destruction of American Liberty*. James Bovard, a contributor to the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*, here exposes a host of

outrageous and absurd infringements on life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The infringements are rife and they spring from petty bureaucrats and zealous officials, elected and unelected.

Mr. Bovard reminds us of an April 1995 Gallup Poll revealing that 39 percent of Americans hold that "the federal government has become so large and powerful that it poses an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens." He notes that President Clinton meanwhile regularly denounces public cynicism about government goodness and purity.

The Bovard approach alphabetically arranges cases of government running amok from A to Z.

Under A, for example, he treats affirmative action, noting Equal Employment Opportunity Commission chairman Clifford Alexander making the case for quotas and declaring in 1968: "We . . . here at EEOC believe in numbers. . . . Our most valid standard is in numbers. . . . The only accomplishment is when we look at all those numbers and see a vast improvement in the picture."

The U.S. Forest Service got criticized on numbers for not hiring enough female firefighters (many woman applicants are unable to pass the Service's strength tests for lugging heavy firefighting equipment). Upshot: It advertised: "Only unqualified applicants may apply."

Under M, Mr. Bovard observes the lengths to which the Drug Enforcement Administration goes to stamp out the evil of medical marijuana: In La Mesa, California, a citizen was sentenced to prison for 16 months for raising a tiny amount of marijuana to treat his AIDS symptoms.

DEA steadfastly refuses to allow doctors to prescribe marijuana to treat glaucoma that could turn into total blindness, despite findings by Yale medical Professor Steven Duke and others of marijuana's positive therapeutic effects on the disease.

Under Z, Mr. Bovard goes after zoning abuses: Coral Gables, Florida, charges residents \$35 to get a permit to paint the bathroom in their home—or the dining room

or any other room. Local building inspectors patrol the streets looking for painting trucks parked at homes which may have not paid the fee.

In 1993 the New York City building inspector bushwhacked Fordham University. Fordham had gotten a permit to build a 480-foot radio tower on its Bronx campus. But after getting the tower half-finished, NYC reversed its position and revoked the permit, setting Fordham back by \$500,000. (Was Fordham reimbursed? You must be kidding.)

As Bovard quotes Albert Jay Nock: "How little important it is to destroy a government, in comparison with destroying the prestige of government." Agreed. ☐

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### **Revolution at the Roots: Making Our Government Smaller, Better, and Closer to Home**

by William D. Eggers and John O'Leary

The Free Press • 1995 • 405 pages + index • \$25.00

Reviewed by James L. Payne

**F**or the general reader, *Revolution at the Roots* provides a comprehensive survey of government-shrinking attempts around the nation. Prodigious research, it takes us to every corner of the land: welfare reform in Wisconsin, Michigan, and New Jersey; budget control in New York and Philadelphia; tax and spending limits in Arizona and Colorado; community policing in Houston; vouchers in Milwaukee. Prominently mentioned are the private, voluntary organizations which prove they can do a better job than government: the Marcus Garvey school for inner city youngsters in Los Angeles (where second-graders read college texts), the St. Martin de Porres shelter for women in Chicago, and dozens of others.

For partisans of liberty, however, this book is something of a disappointment. Eggers and O'Leary are staffers at the Reason Foundation, the libertarian think tank that publishes *Reason* magazine. Their problem is a familiar one for those on the Right: how to criticize government without offending the mainstream politicians and journalists who are so deeply committed to it. Not surprisingly, they pull their punches. The result is a book about shrinking government which fails to explain *why* government should be shrunk.

They mean their book to be a right-wing answer to David Osborne and Ted Gaebler's *Reinventing Government*. The premise of that book, eagerly embraced by the Clinton administration, is that government should not be viewed as a necessary evil: it is a worthy problem-solving machine that just needs an injection of efficiency and flexibility. While Eggers and O'Leary make some conservative points, they don't take issue with this basic outlook. Their remedies closely resemble Osborne and Gaebler's: introduce competition, cut down on red tape, and so on. As a result, they say, we will end up with "better" government. Kept under cover is the argument that government has a fatal flaw that cannot be reformed away.

After a few hundred pages, the reader starts to wonder whether Eggers and O'Leary are purposely omitting discussion of this fatal flaw, or just aren't aware of it. Their principal reform idea is actually rather pro-government, the so-called "Tenth Amendment Revolt." The aim is to reduce the federal government by getting state governments to take over many of its activities. For example, they are all for having government fund mental hospitals; they just don't want the federal government to do it.

A libertarian would hardly concede a governmental role so easily. The fatal flaw looms too large in his thinking, namely that government action is based on the initiation of force, which is an inherently corrupt, and corrupting, way to approach public problems. For real libertarians, talking about