

reason

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ONE DOLLAR

FIGHTING CENSORSHIP
FOR PROFIT: INTERVIEW
WITH PENTHOUSE'S
BOB GUCCIONE

COMSTOCK'S NEMESIS:
THEODORE SCHROEDER
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PENTHOUSE

Frank

Fighting Censorship for

an interview with Bob Guccione

Penthouse Magazine burst upon the American market in 1969. In many ways a direct copy of Playboy (in concept, features, and even the name of its "Forum" letters section), Penthouse soon managed to establish a unique identity. How? By giving its readers more of what they originally bought Playboy for: sex. But not the cheap, sniggering sex that characterized many of Playboy's imitators; Penthouse set new standards in sophisticated erotic photography and provided a significant number of articles and features dealing frankly with sexual issues. In the ultimate proving ground of the marketplace, Penthouse's approach was wildly successful. Its circulation reached four million by 1975, second only to Playboy's, and so worried Number 1 that the latter revised its photographic standards and even launched a competitor, Oui, aimed directly at Penthouse.

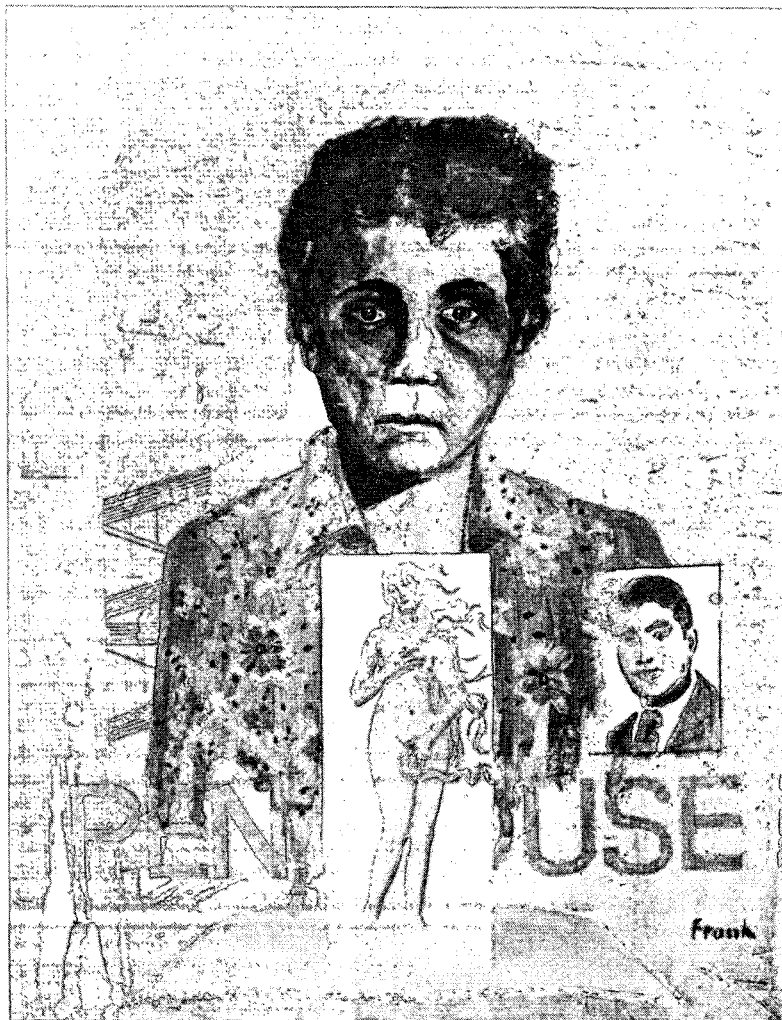
All of which is quite a compliment to the business sense of Bob Guccione, the founder, editor, publisher, and owner of Penthouse. Guccione was born in New York of Sicilian ancestry. He studied art at Blair Academy, then moved to Europe where he supplemented his income as a painter with an assortment of odd jobs, including stints for various publications. Getting turned on to publishing, he launched Penthouse as an English magazine in London in 1965. Initial harassment by the British Post Office on grounds of "obscenity" served to generate enough publicity to guarantee the new magazine's

success; it quickly became England's best-selling men's magazine. As noted above, the American version debuted in 1969, with similar success. Today the Penthouse empire includes the magazines Forum and Viva, as well as a book club and book publishing arm, night clubs, jewelry, and assorted paraphernalia.

From the outset, Penthouse has been an outspoken defender of free speech and press, and opponent of any form of censorship. At the same time, the magazine's editorial policy has avoided the kind of liberal-left articles that represent Playboy's quest for Establishment respectability. All of which made us wonder about Bob Guccione's political philosophy. Was he, perhaps, a near-libertarian, a potential ally in the struggle against the Big Brother state? We got our chance to find out when Guccione traveled to Los Angeles to debate the issue of censorship with Robert Dornan of Citizens for Decent Literature. Editor Manuel Klausner, assisted by C. Ronald Kimberling, interviewed Guccione at his suite in the Beverly Hills Hotel.

As the results below make clear, Guccione is not a "libertarian"; he accepts most of the common government interventions into people's lives and businesses, and the commonly-given justifications for them. As his answers indicate, he is unaware (as are most businessmen) of the economic and historical arguments that undermine the case for interventionism.

Profit



Yet if freedom is to be restored, it is business leaders like Guccione who must be reached. Hopefully, this interview will stimulate thinking on how to do this.

REASON: I'd like to ask first of all, what your purpose was in launching *Penthouse*.

GUCCIONE: The purpose was to bail myself out of England. I'd been living there about eight years and unable to earn enough money to pay my way back to the States. I'd gone to England from Paris where I'd been living and working as a painter. And England was the closest English-speaking country and I had gone absolutely stone-cold broke. I had a burgeoning family at the time and I thought I could find a job in England. In fact I was never able to pay my way out and when I started *Penthouse* it became very successful very quickly and so I was *still* unable to afford to leave the country because I was unable to afford to leave behind something as good and as successful as *Penthouse* was. So it took me altogether 15 years to get out of England.

REASON: Did you have any idea when you launched *Penthouse* of pioneering a new climate of permissiveness or of launching an ideological crusade against censorship.

GUCCIONE: Well, if I didn't going in, I did immediately as the announcements were made that *Penthouse* was going to come out. I've always been a great supporter of individual freedom even when I had no political bias to my interests at all, and when I first thought of *Penthouse*, the real reason why I started was that I was editing a national weekly newspaper which folded for lack of advertising support. I learned one of the great lessons of publishing. You don't publish a newspaper or magazine which depends on advertising and on the whims of other people and on their tastes and their morality for support. I had no financial interest in the paper other than that of an employee. When the paper folded I noted that *Playboy* was the only successful—indeed the only slick man's magazine—on the British market, and it was an American publication, and I couldn't understand why—there was not a British answer to it. And it was at that point that I set about trying to create the British counterpart.

I spent practically three years trying to raise money to do it. When I first launched the magazine, or rather launched the campaign which was a pre-publication subscription campaign (a direct mail campaign rather like Ginsberg did in this country when he launched *Eros*), the furor that it kicked up as a result of the brochures going astray was incredible. Where I thought I was mailing to thousands and thousands of doctors and other professional people, I was in fact sending these brochures

"I've always been a great supporter of individual freedom even when I had no political bias to my interests at all."

containing eight beautiful nudes to 14 year old schoolboys, and old age pensioners and vicars and so on. And members of Parliament. So the screams went up all over the country and in a very short time three separate Parliamentary subcommittees were formed to investigate me and stamp me out, and I was heralded as the harbinger of a new wave of pornography which threatened to flood Britain. Eventually I put something like a million pieces into the mails, which in England has never been done before; it was a monstrous, apocalyptic mail order campaign by their standards. I'd be driving along in my car listening to the BBC and hearing some member of Parliament swear on his life that *Penthouse* would never see the light of day. He was going to stamp me out.

REASON: Were you threatened with being imprisoned because of your activities at *Penthouse*?

GUCCIONE: I was threatened with everything. The Home Secretary tried to get me deported. Questions were asked literally every day for something like three months. One member of Parliament would stand up in the House of Commons and demand that the Postmaster General or the Director of Public Prosecution or the Attorney General or some other cabinet minister resolve the *Penthouse* situation. We were on the news every day and this is really what made *Penthouse* such a success when we first came out. In order finally to stop us, the police reasoned that if I could be stopped economically—because I had no substance at the time—I'd done all this on credit—*Penthouse* would not come out. So they dug up an old law which dealt with the sending of indecent, not obscene but indecent materials through the post and two policemen were assigned eight-hour shifts three times a day so that six cops were sitting outside my house in Chelsea in London—three 8-hour

shifts a day for two solid weeks, ready to hand me this summons. Since it was a technical rather than a criminal summons, they couldn't enter my premises. So the police were waiting for me to come out of the house and they were going to hit me with the summons—but of course I had no intention of leaving at that time, knowing what their tactics were. I had a staff of one—an art director was working for me. And he would arrive every morning with galleys and then he would stick the galleys in the letter box and I would collect them and with the galleys would come sandwiches and chewing gum and cigarettes—the whole thing was like a farce, with the Keystone cops sitting across the street.

REASON: Did they ever get to serve their summons on you?

GUCCIONE: They did eventually, because my lawyers told me when it was time for me to come out and take the summons, because we knew that properly timed the court case would have put the finishing touches on a landslide success that we then anticipated with the first issue of *Penthouse* because everybody in England knew that this magazine was going to come out.

REASON: What was the original press run for *Penthouse*?

GUCCIONE: It was 120,000, which is very big in England. And when *Penthouse* hit 300,000 it became the all time biggest selling slick magazine in England—at a figure of 300,000. Today in England it's 490,000.

REASON: Did you have any political supporters in Parliament during these early frantic periods?

GUCCIONE: No. Because at that time it was so new that no one really knew what to expect of me because I had no record of publishing in England. I had only been an employee of a newspaper, which was a very ordinary, conservative, Anglo-American kind of newspaper, so there was nothing to judge. So no one was going to align themselves with me—they did not know what I really stood for.

REASON: Did you have any political allegiance at the time or political affiliation?

GUCCIONE: Not going in. I emerged, I suppose, as a great libertarian as far as the British system was concerned, but there was no group or party with which I affiliated myself.

REASON: Do you have any *current* political allegiance with any established party?

GUCCIONE: No. I don't. I've always considered

myself extremely conservative in purely social terms and in fiscal terms. As far as art is concerned or publishing or first amendment rights then I am very much a libertarian. I was once asked on a TV show in Washington what my political position was, and I had never considered it before, because I had never considered myself a political animal—I've never voted because I'm not a party man and I don't follow individuals—I'm a strictly constitutional man. I think if you interfere with the Constitution of the United States you're violating government as it should be. The way our government was created ideally is the way I think it should be in effect today. If one takes Thomas Jefferson's philosophy as a way of government then I don't think it's possible to do any better.

REASON: What do you believe to be the proper role of government?

GUCCIONE: I think government is there to protect us from each other. Government's there to see to it that our freedoms are fully guaranteed and that our rights are fully implementable at all times. They're not there to control our way of life—only to insure that our way of life as guaranteed by the Constitution is always accessible to us.

REASON: Let me ask your views on some specific issues, Bob; where do you stand on the question of legalized gambling?

GUCCIONE: Well, I think gambling should be legalized, because I think gambling's going on everywhere. There isn't a state in the United States in which you cannot find illegal games, and I'd rather see local and federal governments collect their taxes from legalized gambling rather than from other popular sources. Meanwhile, the underworld is ripping off the cream

"When control is taken from the hands of the individual—as it is in the case of alcoholism and in the case of drug addiction—then it has to be bad."

through gaming. There are billions and billions of dollars that go underground every year as a result of illicit gaming. It's stupid to try and say that gambling is a phenomenon of morality. It only becomes a moral problem when you inhibit the people—when you stop them and say well this is not right—you shouldn't gamble—and pass laws to ensure that they don't gamble. This creates a moral problem, but until the government passes such laws it's not a moral problem. It's something that man has always done,



and like prostitution, always will do. You'll never stamp it out.

REASON: I presume that you're also in favor of legalizing prostitution?

GUCCIONE: Absolutely. Because, again, like gaming, it's always gone on. It is the world's oldest profession—no question about it—and it is absolutely natural to man and woman that these needs be satisfied and that there are people to satisfy them. I think that perhaps more marriages would be saved in the end if men and women had some alternative source of excitement in their lives. Men perhaps would then not have to go out and cultivate serious relationships in order to get laid. Prostitution has always been therapeutic and to say we as a society don't need this sort of therapy is to deny the existence of the "illness"—the existence of sexual incompatability between people. But there is sexual incompatability between more married people than not.

REASON: What if we turn to another area of consensual conduct; how do you feel about the propriety of laws against drug use or drug possession?

GUCCIONE: Well, this is one area in which, perhaps, I'm much too conservative for the tastes of the

libertarian movement. I think this is one of the few areas where social conduct *must* be regulated by some kind of governmental machinery—whether it's police or whatever. *Penthouse* has fought a lot of battles on this front and we've done a lot of investigative reporting. We managed to get 17 separate pieces of legislation through Congress dealing with drug traffic and drug abuse in this country—and if we had any hobby at all, outside of the new veterans thing that we're running, it's dealing with drug trafficking. We located and pinpointed on maps the Turkish poppy fields where opium was being cultivated and then shipped in to Marseilles—and we turned up the very plant where it was being processed before it was sent into the United States.

REASON: That sounds like Bill Buckley taking pride

"I believe to some extent we must regulate the activities of our society if we are to have a society, because order and society are one and the same thing."

in leading the crusade against censorship! How do you reconcile your view that private consensual sexual conduct should be legal and private consensual conduct involving say the use of marijuana in somebody's home should be criminal.

GUCCIONE: Well, it seems like a dichotomy, but it really isn't. Because I'm not talking about marijuana. I do not regard marijuana as a drug. It's not as much of a drug as nicotine and it's not as conducive to social disorder, say, as alcohol is. I regard it as a completely harmless kind of soft drug.

I'm talking about hard drugs such as heroin and cocaine and there's a great difference between hard drugs and sexual activity. One can to the greatest possible extent control one's feelings, sexually, unless one is sick, but one cannot control the debilitating spread of drug use. We know that pregnant women on drugs are going to give birth to drug addicted infants. And it's very easy to hook innocent people on drugs and they have no control over that. I think that in an area where an individual is likely to lose control (which I would assume would be contrary to the philosophy of the libertarian movement), when control is taken from the hands of the individual—as it is in the case of alcoholism and it is in the case of drug addiction—then it has to be bad.

REASON: Where do you stand, Bob, on prohibition of alcohol? Are you in favor of another prohibition experience?

GUCCIONE: Not at all.

REASON: How do you distinguish that from hard drugs?

GUCCIONE: Because, once again, it's very easy to become addicted. It's much more easy to become addicted to a narcotic, to a hard drug, than it is to become an alcoholic. Alcoholics are not made by drink. Alcoholics are people who are as mentally, emotionally and psychologically disposed to becoming hooked on alcohol as they are to becoming hooked on drugs. In other words, there is an alcoholic prone or a drug addict prone type. But it takes a lot longer for alcohol to have that effect on the individual—to hook the individual. And finally, it is not as destructive as drug abuse—I mean, people don't go out and rob and kill and maim to get enough money to support a drink habit that they do to support a drug habit. Even if alcohol was prohibited and was selling for the highest possible price—it would never sell for the kind of prices that drugs do.

REASON: What about the inherent unenforceability of laws against private consensual conduct such as drug trafficking. Don't you think that there are great social costs that society must bear if they attempt to wage the ineffective fight against drug use by passing criminal laws?

GUCCIONE: Well this unfortunately is one of the most fragile points of society—police corruption is a natural social phenomenon and it never has been and it will never be possible to completely enforce the law where there are these amounts of money concerned. There's organized criminal activity in the dealing of drugs—there's to a great extent government complicity in the trafficking of drugs: there certainly was in Southeast Asia.

And how one finally resolves the problem, I don't know. I believe these things should be resolved through education and I believe in the old cliché that education is the answer to most of our social ills. The greater the area of communication between two individuals on the sexual front, the more likely the relationship is going to last. The same thing is true for government and society. The broader the dialog between the two the greater the understanding and the greater the areas of communication—the greater the touch points between the two, the more likely the relationship between society and government is going to last.

REASON: Bob, how do you respond to the argument that's made by proponents of censorship that exposure to pornography or obscenity has long run deleterious effects on society and therefore there's a proper role for government in trying to suppress obscenity or pornography.

GUCCIONE: There's no foundation in fact whatsoever to that argument. In fact the four major studies that have been done in the Western world in recent years, although they were treated differently and were done under different social conditions, in basically different societies (American, Danish, British, and German) nonetheless the findings were precisely the same. There's no evidence at all that pornography has any deleterious effect either on adults or on children. In fact, there's an enormous amount of evidence to show that pornography has positive therapeutic value in the treatment of a lot of sexual deviates who need this kind of stimulation.

REASON: Who do you feel about the issue of abortion?

GUCCIONE: I've always believed that a person should have the final say over his own body. You're the master of your own universe, your own world, and certainly this is true in the case of abortion. If a woman wants to rid her body of an unwanted child, that's her business and she should have that right. Drug abuse again is something else. It's something that in practice you cannot confine to the limitations of your own body, and your own world. You may abuse yourself, but in order to go on abusing yourself, you will inevitably have to go ahead and abuse others and that's where I draw the line.

REASON: You're currently running a series in *Penthouse* on the problems facing Vietnam veterans and talking about the problems of the Vietnam vet who's been left all alone here in the nation's haste to forget the war to grapple with his own problems. Let me ask you a question which goes prior to the existence of Vietnamese veterans: do you believe, Bob, that conscription of an individual to fight a war is ever justified?

GUCCIONE: I'm afraid that once again I take what is a much more moderate stand on this than your group. I believe that there comes a time in the life of any society when it is necessary for a government to—for its own protection and protection of the society at large—to be able to force an individual to do something which is bad, which is against his best wishes. There are very, very few instances but in the case of the war, yes, if your country's attacked, the government ideally represents the heart and soul, the brain of that society, and it's at a moment like that, just as the brain snaps to attention and forces the body to move in a certain defensive way, that conscription can become necessary and should be accepted and recognized as such. Now if the government, as in the case of the Vietnam War, involves itself for reasons other than those which would benefit society at large, then I think that certainly something should be done about the government. But

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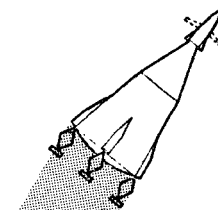
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if one is, as in the case of the Second World War, forced to defend one's homeland, and if enough people don't volunteer, then I think that conscription has to be necessary. There is the old saw about the country is good for you while you make something of this way of life in times of peace, therefore in times of war every good man has to come to the aid of his country. I really believe that.

REASON: Are you familiar with the works of Revisionist historians such as Harry Elmer Barnes, or Kolko or some of the others who have talked about the origins of World War II or World War I or the Korean War and place responsibility at least in part on the activity of the American governments and other Western governments in getting involved in these conflagrations?

GUCCIONE: I've heard a lot of these theories and in some instances I agree with them. I think that whereas wars are not fought today for religious, ideological reasons as they were in the past, they're now being fought for other reasons, such as economic

"I believe the government should create the schools, because what else are we paying taxes for?"

reasons. I think big business—huge industrial and fuel interests may want to get us into a war.

REASON: Do you think American students should be conscripted to fight in such a war?

GUCCIONE: I don't think that we have any choice. Because whatever creates a war, whatever starts a war, it's the *fact* of war which makes conscription necessary or not. You can't say, look I'm not going to fight this war because it was started by the combined oil interests of the United States, and let the guys that own the oil companies and the gas stations go off and fight the war. You can't say that because war is a fact of life and a fact of death.

REASON: Well, what about the Vietnamese War? Was conscription justified as to American citizens to fight in that war?

GUCCIONE: As the Vietnam War was going on I supported it because, again, the war was a fact of life. But I don't believe that it was necessary for us to be in that war, and I don't believe along with that there should have been conscription. I think that we should

never have gone in there in the first instance, but once in there I think that we certainly had to fight. We certainly had as a society to support it.

REASON: Where do you stand on the question of amnesty for draft evaders?

GUCCIONE: I don't agree with it. I don't believe that the draft dodgers should receive amnesty. Because that sets them apart from those who accepted the conscription, a lot of whom died, who regarded the war as just as hostile to their own philosophy of life, just as incompatible with their feelings and their sentiments, as those who successfully evaded the draft. Why do we punish one member of society and not another for the self-same cause. I think that if guys who allowed themselves to be conscripted against their best wishes and the wishes of their family went off to fight an unpopular war, and died for it, or were maimed or wounded or in some way permanently affected by the war, then I think equal punishment, and it *is* punishment, should be meted out to those who at the time successfully evaded the draft.

REASON: If there were several publishers or movie producers that were in prison for violating pornography laws, might you not also argue that we should, in fairness to those who are serving time (such as Ginsberg), punish the rest of these guys who are still outside roaming free to publish their filthy trash.

GUCCIONE: No. Because I don't believe that in the first instance people like Ginsberg should have been locked up. I mean, it's not possible to compare sex, pornography, obscenity—morality on that level—with war, with killing, murder, violence. These are two completely separate things.

REASON: To change the subject, what do you think, Bob, is the proper role of the government as to the problem of racial discrimination.

GUCCIONE: Well I don't see the government has any role in racial discrimination. I think racial discrimination is a social phenomenon and government should play no part in it. I don't believe in busing—forcing a child to go to a school that may be a long way away from his home, just to satisfy the ostensible social need for integration. I think this makes a mockery of our social system and our freedoms. I think if there's an all black school or all white school it's because it's an all black neighborhood or an all white neighborhood. People should have the right to move where they want to move; if they can afford to live in a certain area it should be entirely up to them whether they want to live in that area or not. In no way should a government interfere with social conditions at this level—strictly social conditions.

REASON: What about the government role in operating public schools and compulsory school attendance laws? Do you think that's justifiable or proper?

GUCCIONE: I think that up to a certain age it becomes necessary to enforce education. It's not possible to harm a child by forcing him to go to school up to a certain number of years. I think that there has to be a social order. Where the libertarian movement, I believe, goes wrong, is that it makes the same mistakes as the more conservative in that it lays down absolute laws.

Saying that there shall be no law to regulate the life of the individual is an absolute—it's like saying there should be such a thing as absolute freedom. There cannot be absolute freedom because absolute freedom is anarchy. There must be a social order of some sort if we're to live together as a society. (Those who don't want to live under the social system are obviously free to move to some other country to form their own social order somewhere else—I mean, that's why the United States was formed in the beginning.) So I believe to some extent we must regulate the activities of our society if we are to have a society, because order and society are one and the same thing.

REASON: How do you feel about the problem of government indoctrination of children in terms of teaching them the advantages of government control over the economy, and government suppression of literature and whatever, as against private schools which would be free to inculcate children in any philosophy they deemed appropriate, whether it's individualistic or socialistic?

GUCCIONE: Well I'm not aware that public schools are being used by the government to ram government philosophies into the heads of kids—I don't see that and it certainly wasn't my experience. I went to a public school and I also went to a private school and I found that the class was very much a self contained educational unit controlled by the teacher and the children were subject to the teacher's personal philosophy or his personal attitudes. I never remember having any kind of government propaganda jammed down my throat and if I saw that in existence today, I would yank my kid out of a school like that. I would not allow my children to attend such a school.

I believe the government should create the schools because what else are we paying taxes for? To make education possible. And at least in the formative years of a child see to it that that child attends school. After the child can make up his own mind and reaches some semblance of intellectual maturity, then the child has a right to make up its own mind whether it should attend school or not. There are a lot of parents who are irresponsible, and given an opportunity would keep their kids out of school and wouldn't really care whether the kids went to school

or not. That's just another instance where the individual—i.e., the child—is having its life possibly damaged by irresponsible parents, whereas it should be placed in this educational environment until such time as it can make up its own mind. And I think that should be compatible with the libertarian movement.

REASON: There are many critics who say the public school system is a failure. People are graduating from high school without even knowing how to read or write, and discipline is more of a problem than education is in many inner city schools. Do you think that the notion that we tax people to support these kind of schools and that these kind of schools can rely on the continuing inflow of tax revenue whether they do a good job or bad, is defensible?

GUCCIONE: Well, there's a very simple answer to that. Where schools don't meet the standards that a local community would require of them, in this instance educationally, then the local community should do something about it. I mean they should absolutely refuse to pay their taxes if they can't get any results with their local public schools. Or they ought to vote whoever's in power in that particular town or county out. You know we still have our voting rights, and I've even done this, where I've stood up and refused to pay taxes.

REASON: Could you be specific? What's your experience been in refusing to pay taxes, Bob?

GUCCIONE: Well, for six years I refused publicly to pay my taxes in England. I became in my area of business, which is publishing, the biggest single earner of foreign currency from Britain. I structured my company in such a fashion as I did not have to pay the taxes that they would normally require of me. And I gave my reasons. I said you did everything possible to stop me, and a great deal of other things happened in England to show that I was not acceptable to Britain—not being an old public school boy in the British system, not being British, being

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American, being Italian-American and all that sort of thing—so I said, "Well, fuck you. You know I've worked for this money and it's mine and I created a foreign corporation which absorbed the foreign income which was otherwise being flowed into Britain."

REASON: Well, Bob, aren't you talking about tax avoidance rather than tax evasion? Have you ever refused to pay a tax that you were not able to circumvent through careful planning?

GUCCIONE: No. Because it's too easy for the other side just to pick you up and lock you up. There's no fight against that. What I did do I did publicly.

REASON: Do you see any justification for ever requiring an individual to pay taxes against his will to support an activity that he prefers not to support.

GUCCIONE: Yes. For the same reasons I gave you before. If you accept living in a society then you must recognize the need for some social order, and there is no machinery for dealing with individual

"You cannot have a highly industrialized society like this and a highly competitive free enterprise society without some kind of mechanism for fundamentally controlling the economy."

needs and individual tastes in a community as large as the 200,000,000 population of the United States. You can't say all right, some of you want the war to go on in Vietnam so we will take so much from you and a lot of you don't want the war so you won't have to pay your taxes to support it. This just cannot be. It's not a practical situation.

Ideologically, of course I agree with you. Theoretically, I agree that no one should pay for things that they don't want. I don't like to pay taxes to support cops that run around chasing people on the highways and give you tickets because you stand too long outside of a supermarket. My argument is like everybody else's argument in this country. "Well, why don't you go out and catch a thief or go out and stop a drug peddler? What are you hanging around highways and lurking behind sign boards and hiding up driveways just to snatch people that go by? Haven't you got anything better to do?" So in theory I agree with you, but in practice I cannot.

REASON: It seems to me that you've shown the world that in theory you might be able to stand for something and you might also be able to achieve that

aim in practice. Why are you so timid on issues that don't relate to censorship or pornography?

GUCCIONE: Because, the battles that I fight, I fight in the most difficult way. That is, if you're fighting a battle within the social order, the most difficult way is to fight with the other man's weapons. If you're called out on a duel and the guy says to you, here, you have a choice of guns, period, that's no choice. Those are his weapons. If you accept those it's the hardest way to fight a battle if the gun happens not to be your forte. I've always fought my battles within the system. So if I've won, I've won on the other man's terms. I've never tried to fight those battles entirely on my own territory, because it's the easiest thing in the world to say, OK I refuse to do this and become a martyr. They lock you up and they stick you behind bars and you're rendered ineffectual. I'd rather be successful; I'd rather fight a guerilla action than an organized war.

REASON: Let me ask, Bob, to turn to another area, how do you feel about the propriety of such regulations as wage price controls or minimum wage laws?

GUCCIONE: Price controls to stop inflation for example may become necessary, and once again one has to regard the practical aspects of an economy in action. In some instances I'm in favor of price controls and other times I think that it inhibits the competitive stance of private industry. But if our economy was not subject to the same kind of mechanistic order that society is at large, then we would have a kind of economic anarchy and that cannot possibly benefit us as individuals.

REASON: Do you believe in free trade?

GUCCIONE: Yes. Absolutely.

REASON: Do you consider economic freedom to be as important or less important than other basic freedoms?

GUCCIONE: No. I think every freedom is equally important. You cannot take one freedom away from a man—economic freedom, intellectual freedom, freedom of speech. You cannot take one freedom away and allow the other freedoms to remain, because each freedom impinges on the other.

REASON: Do you think, Bob, that the government should have the right to control the price at which you sell a copy of *Penthouse* or ad space in *Penthouse*?

GUCCIONE: Under normal circumstances I would say no. But the controlling, for example, of the cover prices of magazines today has been made to some

extent necessary by the shortage of paper and the upward cost of supply.

REASON: Given the experience that we've had with wage price controls in the United States since 1971 it's interesting that you would emphasize the practical side and still be in favor of wage price controls whereas most business men are saying that wage price controls have been ineffective, they lead to shortages, they protracted the inflationary period, and they don't at all help the problems of inflation.

GUCCIONE: Well I'm not saying that the way it's done—that it's done properly. These people are criticizing the manner in which the system is being applied. Speaking in very simplistic terms, you cannot have a highly industrialized society like this and a highly competitive free enterprise society without some kind of mechanism for fundamentally controlling the economy. It must be controlled at some level.

REASON: Are you saying that the Dick Nixons and the Gerald Fords and the energy czars in Washington are better disposed to make decisions as to allocation or production of resources than private entrepreneurs?

GUCCIONE: I don't think that Dick Nixon or Gerald Ford have the right, the intelligence, the know-how or the talent to control anything other

COMING NEXT MONTH

November brings REASON's annual Book Review Issue. This year's issue includes a number of the most important books of the past year, including Robert Nozick's National Book Award-winning Anarchy, State, and Utopia (reviewed by Eric Mack), Nobel Prize winner F. A. Hayek's Law, Legislation and Liberty (Doug den Uyl), Murray Rothbard's Conceived in Liberty (Henry Adams), Thomas Szasz's Ceremonial Chemistry (Lynn Kinsky), Tibor Machan's The Pseudo-Science of B. F. Skinner (John O. Nelson), Yale Brozen's Advertising and Society (Israel Kirzner) and Brozen's The Competitive Economy (D. T. Armentano). Also in the issue will be reviews of George Smith's Atheism, James Buchanan's The Limits of Liberty, Wilfred Beckerman's Two Cheers for the Affluent Society, and several other recent books. Plus a special essay on Grand Master Nebula Award winner Robert A. Heinlein, David Brudnoy's Viewpoint, and all of REASON's regular columns and features.

than their own bowel movements and even that is somewhat in doubt. Certainly private entrepreneurs have more practical experience, more line experience, more front line experience. I cannot say that the way price controls have been implemented in this country are right, that they've been done properly. I can only say that some kind of price controls system—mechanism—is necessary. There is an order which extends beyond the human being—the individual being—throughout the universe, and I believe that in every instance the order must complement the needs of the individual and the needs of the individual must complement the order.

REASON: Well, I don't think that libertarians are against the concept of order. It's a question of whether or not the order, the structure of society is determined by voluntary decisions or whether it's determined by some coercive means.

GUCCIONE: Well, so far, the political system for determining the social order in this country is the best that the world has ever known: we have never known a better system. Obviously it's full of holes, it's not as good as it could be. Hopefully, in time it will improve—but in real terms, this is the best social and political system in the world.

REASON: Some commentators have suggested that taking positions on economic issues is an easy pastime

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for people who normally would be reluctant to take strong positions in areas outside of their areas of expertise. When it comes to matters of profound economic significance such as controlling the economy, controlling inflation, the minimum wage laws and the like, every man has his own view of this, even though he's never studied it. Can you comment on that?

GUCCIONE: Well, I honestly don't know that every man takes a strong position on economic matters, in philosophical terms. I'm really not aware of it. I don't often get into it. I certainly have my own attitudes, my own views, and I'm very much concerned with economic matters and the economic system under which we live, because it affects me in terms of many millions of dollars. The volume of business that I do is about \$100,000,000 a year and I am the sole owner of all of my companies. I am deeply concerned with the very small percentage points of difference in terms of taxes and controls and prices and wages and so on. So I have every reason to be vitally concerned—but I'm not sure how other people regard the nation's economy except in terms of how much taxes they pay.

"The three highest paid individuals in my organization—which comprises some 500 employees—are women, rather than men."

I have to say this: we Americans bitch about our taxes, and I agree that we *should* bitch about our taxes. But once again having lived in Europe one realizes that taxes that Europeans pay when compared to the taxes we pay, it's a joke. The British pay from two to three times the amount of taxes that Americans pay. We don't know how easy we have it in this country in proportion to the rest of the world. That's just an aside—I'm not condoning taxation. Believe me, it affects me more than it affects most people, but I'm saying that in real terms we really have it easy compared to the rest of the world.

REASON: But one can gain a perverse sense of satisfaction by looking at how much worse other people have it, when you're doing very badly yourself.

GUCCIONE: That's unfortunately the way of all flesh.

REASON: What about your attitude towards women. Do you have any general feelings about women?

GUCCIONE: I love the very concept of women. I was brought up to have great regard and great respect for women. I've never been a chauvinist in the sense that the women's libbers would like to classify me. I have very strong beliefs on all aspects of women's liberation and in many ways *Penthouse* is women's liberation in action, and always has been. We put more girls forward, and we have more women executives than any company that I've ever heard of of a comparable size. We have more corporate officers who are women, and the three highest paid individuals in my organization, which comprises some 500 employees, are women, rather than men. I find them to be great workers. Extremely dedicated, faithful. Extremely ambitious and resourceful when given opportunities. And it's like finding a gold mine. When I first discovered what women could do—that you give a woman an opportunity, all things being equal, and she's going to work twice as hard, three times as hard as the average guy—it was a great day for me, because I have in many instances, hired nothing but women. In the sales side for example, selling space for *Penthouse*—I have only women selling space. In recent months I've employed one or two guys. But originally the work force was entirely female, and whereas the average industry standard is one and a half calls per day per space salesperson, my space saleswomen on an average call on seven possible accounts a day.

REASON: So you do draw a distinction then, sexually, as against merely basing on individual talents. You single out women and prefer them in your organization as against men?

GUCCIONE: I believe that you pay for merit, sex aside. If a person does a good job you pay them well. If you don't someone else will. So it's a question not of sex but of meritorious or otherwise performance.

REASON: Bob, let me ask you if you could briefly summarize your views on the propriety of censorship? What do you see as the evils of censorship?

GUCCIONE: I think that the very foundation of our way of life and our system of government and our social order is based on a free press. The freedom to communicate ideas across this nation and throughout society is absolutely fundamental to the continued existence of a free democratic system, like the one which we enjoy at the moment, or we *did* enjoy up until the time of the Burger decision. I think in every area, whether we're talking about a society at large, about the government, or whether we're talking about individual relationships, human relationships, communication is the big thing. The ability to communicate ideas.

REASON: Well thank you very much, for communicating your ideas to us. ☐