

Isn't All Money Fake?

E. B. Maple (Peter Werbe)

a review of

Counterfeit Currency: How To Really Make Money, M. Thomas Collins, Loompanics Unlimited, P.O. Box 1197, Port Townsend WA 98368, \$15; \$3 shipping.

Money is a fairly curious substance. Its official function is to represent value, but once said, you can immediately challenge all the assumptions inherent in such a formulation: Value?; its representation? Since value itself is a representation of abstract worth, money operates within economies as a representation of a representation! No wonder its properties seem so inscrutable.

Unable to get a reasonable handle on what money is and how it functions gives rise to a host of whacky theories about it. For instance, to a whole section of the right-wing, money has a totemic quality somehow bound up with the basis of American liberties which began to unravel with the passage of the Federal Reserve Act in 1913.

Money, by its very nature, can only be successfully issued by a government, but once in circulation it seems to have a life of its own, uncontrolled by those who attempt administrative methods to affect its fluctuations. The money nuts say the latter problem stems from currency no longer being tied to a gold standard or other precious metal. This fails to realize that granting gold (in reality, only a pretty rock) a particular value is no less an arbitrary assignment of worth than what they ascribe to unbacked currency. In fact, the whole concept of value is itself an abstraction dependent upon human assignation.

In any event, we know those funny pieces of paper are what make the capitalist world go 'round and that their possession translates into political domination and social power. Wars are fought, people's lives made miserable, all for these scraps with pictures of dead politicians on them. We also know governments jealously guard their monopoly over the printing of money and few crimes are more assiduously pursued than counterfeiting.

The dreaded fear is that unauthorized printing of currency will erode the value of money and public confidence in it, concerns which are undoubtedly true. One startling assertion in *Counterfeit Currency* is that 20% of U.S. money is bogus, a dark secret kept from the population for the above reasons.

Collins' essay, though, is not a treatise on the perplexing qualities of money, but a how-to manual, a precise, step-by-step guide to producing and circulating counterfeit money. It's hard to imagine a great number of people will actually put the book's techniques into practice, but it is consistent with Loompanic's other wild manuals on the commission of illegal acts such as how to build your own atom bomb and a series on how to kill.

Loompanics' publisher, Michael Hoy, fashions himself an anarchist of sorts, more of a free market, individualist than is palatable to anti-capitalist, communal types, but it is clear from books like this and others in his catalog that he has little respect for government and polite society.

Is it radical for anarchists to print and circulate bad money? Is it destructive of the state or just an innovative way to partake in the circulation of commodities? Is eroding public confidence in the currency good? Does counterfeiting beat work or is it simply another job? Are the high risks worth the effort?

These are questions for the reader to ponder. The book is interesting as an unabashed manual of criminality and for its blatant nose thumbing at the law, but much of the text is devoted to the details of counterfeiting and probably of interest solely to those planning a career shift or desiring an income supplement.

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