



# Liberty News

February 2001

*a publication of the Libertarian Party of Boulder County*

## Opposing Social Programs Doesn't Mean You Don't Care

*(part 2) by Bryan Griffin*

*[This article is continued from the January edition of Liberty News.]*

Once you allow the government to start doing charitable work, what then becomes the proper function of government? Where does it stop growing and is there any reason it would decide to stop itself?

"If you exceed this proper limit -- if you attempt to make the law religious, fraternal, equalizing, philanthropic, industrial, literary, or artistic -- you will then be lost in an uncharted territory, in vagueness and uncertainty, in a forced utopia or, even worse, in a multitude of utopias, each striving to seize the law and impose it upon you. This is true because fraternity and philanthropy, unlike justice, do not have precise limits. Once started, where will you stop? And where will the law stop itself?"

In order to decide where to draw the line, you need to decide what the proper function of government is, what its reason for existing in the first place is. Then you can decide if any particular activity falls within that scope or not. Ideally the government should do no less, and no more than this.

One last quote from "The Law":

### **Proper Legislative Functions**

It is not true that the legislator has absolute power over our persons and property. The existence of persons and property preceded the existence of the legislator, and his function is only to guarantee their safety.

It is not true that the function of law is to regulate our consciences, our ideas, our wills, our education, our opinions, our work, our trade, our talents, or our pleasures. The function of law is to protect the free exercise of these rights, and to prevent any person from interfering with the free

exercise of these same rights by any other person.

Since law necessarily requires the support of force, its lawful domain is only in the areas where the use of force is necessary. This is justice.

Every individual has the right to use force for lawful self-defense. It is for this reason that the collective force -- which is only the organized combination of the individual forces -- may lawfully be used for the same purpose; and it cannot be used legitimately for any other purpose.

Law is solely the organization of the individual right of self-defense which existed before law was formalized. Law is justice.

If the government goes beyond the role of defending our rights, it is engaging in legislating morality. The government has finite resources. Which subset of problems to spend those resources on is a moral choice. Money being given to AIDS research is not available to help the homeless. People should be free to make their own moral choices, the government shouldn't impose those choices on us.

The reason many people do not recognize that the government is legislating morality is simply because it is doing so indirectly. It takes our money and then spends it for us rather than directly commanding us to spend the money contrary to our own moral choices. Even though the choices are hidden from us, the government is still essentially deciding that *you* must spend \$X on AIDS research vs. \$Y on the homeless vs. \$Z on breast cancer research, etc.

The objection many people will have to our philosophy is "But if the government doesn't fund \$X, it won't get done." Our interpretation of the underlying meaning of this would be: "I think X is important but

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## Libertarians Care (continued from page 1)

I don't know if I can persuade enough people of this to voluntarily fund it. Therefore I need the government to force people to pay for what *I* think is more important than whatever they want to spend their money on. I don't want to give them the option to disagree with me, since otherwise *my* goals won't be met (I don't care if this causes people to fail to meet their own goals)."

One misleading thing about the argument for government programs is that if the government were actually listening to the people when making its decisions, presumably a *majority* of the people must also feel X is an important goal if the government were to fund it. If that many people favor something, why can't it be voluntarily non-government funded? Why can't the wishes of the minority be respected and they be allowed to fund their own projects?

Some related objections would be "But the reason the government needs to step in is because the private sector isn't doing anything. Isn't this what the Republicans were pushing for, didn't they try encouraging more private donations and there are still problems?". Often the reason the private sector isn't working on a particular problem is because the government is taking so much money from people they don't have much left over for charitable contributions. In addition many people are persuaded to accept the view that it's "the government's problem to help people, let them worry about it, you don't need to bother contributing."

The views of libertarians are drastically different from the actions of the Republican Party over the last couple of decades regarding government spending. Unfortunately so much money is tied up in taxation that small token cuts don't make enough of a difference in the money available for charitable activities to have enough of an effect. In addition, most people still hold this view of the government as being responsible for helping people. Libertarians are talking about a federal government that is a tiny fraction of the size of the current one, freeing a huge amount of money up for private donations.

In practical terms this may not happen any time soon. One solution to this would be to institute a tax *credit* for donations rather than a tax *deduction*. Effectively this would mean that someone could choose to directly give for example \$1000 to a homeless shelter

rather than to the government. Presumably there would initially be a cap on the size of the tax credit while programs transition to the private sector. A less effective step (but still preferable to the current situation), would be to let people specify on their tax forms what percentage of their money should go to what part of government. (Including the debt).

It is natural to wish to make the world a better place to live, and to do so sometimes we need the cooperation of other people and their resources. Naturally we wish to get them to do what *we* want, rather than what *they* may wish to do. It seems there are only two ways to get people to do what you wish. Either you persuade them to voluntarily join with you, or you force them to go along. Libertarians believe persuasion is superior to force.

If your case isn't strong enough to convince people to voluntarily help you, what right do you have to force them to help your cause vs. letting them pursue the causes they feel are important? Is there some reason to believe that your decisions are somehow a priori "right" and those of the minority are not?

One common non-libertarian argument against this is that "the ends justify the means". The question is, once you take that point of view, where do you draw the line? What means are not acceptable? Is it right to decide that because you can force people to go along with your viewpoint, and because *you* think the ends are important enough, you can do what you wish to other people? What prevents others from using the same argument against you to attempt to force their choices on you because they feel the ends justify their means? Libertarians are pro-choice on most everything. We feel that simply because you *can* force people to go along with your viewpoint through taxing them, even if *you* think the ends are important, that shouldn't lead you to forcibly impose your moral choices on others.

Does the majority have a moral right to force its views on the minority, simply because they are able to? Funding social causes through taxation is allowing the (Moral?) majority to decide how to spend my money. This is implying that because you (the majority) outnumber me things get done your way. You get to take my money and support the causes you wish rather than those I wish.

In exactly what way is this different from the street gang philosophy of "might makes right", i.e. the gang able to force its view on the other gangs is "right"? Simply because the threat of force is hidden, and voting boxes are used instead of street fights to determine which gang is larger, does that make the victor any more "right" than the winner of a gang fight? The underlying philosophy is still "we outnumber you", so

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Quotable...

Truth springs from argument amongst friends.

-- David Hume

# Support Your Local Gun Show!

by Joe Johnson

## Boulder County Gun Show -- Patriots Needed!

Finally, a gun show in Boulder County. While it's true, that the majority of new memberships in the LPBC last year came from gun shows held outside of Boulder County, I think that you will agree that we would do MUCH better with a show here at home - in Boulder County. There is only one show per year in Boulder County, and that show will be held the weekend of Feb. 17-18. The show will be held at the Boulder County Fairgrounds in Longmont. Unfortunately, our usual setup staff will be out of town that weekend, and so if this show is going to take place, I need volunteers from the LPBC membership.

It has been said that we need to do more outreach shows in our home county, and I agree. Here is our chance to do just that. And after the recent Boulder city council ruling, the iron is hot! The El Paso County LP has had a presence at every show in their county this year, and the results are beginning to tell of their effort. Here is our chance to show the El Paso LP that we

(LPBC), and not they, are the #1 affiliate in this state! Will you help, by volunteering to help set up and work one or more shifts at the booth? Remember, freedom is not free.

Please contact me, Joe Johnson, at: 303-604-9153 (home) or joejohn@us.ibm.com

If I am unable to recruit enough volunteers in the next few days, we will not be able to have a booth at this year's show, and we'll have to wait a whole year to let Boulder County gun owners know that they have a choice.

Joe Johnson  
Liberty in my lifetime!

Volunteer opportunities for staffing the LP booth are also available at other gun shows this year. For a complete list of upcoming shows, please see the web page <http://www.lpboulder.com/gunshows.html>

Even if you can't volunteer, be sure to show up, have fun, and give support to the Libertarian booth!

## From the Chairman

by Lorene Van Buren

My activities the past month have included attending a Fort Collins breakfast, a Boulder lunch and networking at a Second Amendment Sisters Sunday afternoon meeting and indoor picnic.

I also engaged in an enlightening Conversation with an Anarchist and was a bit surprised to hear that the anarchist's main concern or frustration with the Libertarian Party is that we so are protective of the role of government in our lives, that we go around saying "oh, yes, we need government services for ...." (fill in the blank). Have we really bought into the mainstream philosophy that far? My personal concern in this area is the extent some of our group supports government owned "open space".

Readers, please take a few minutes to get involved. A letter to the editor of this publication either in support of or in opposition to something I say is just as good as any other way to get started. Come on, crawl out of your shells and communicate!

## January LPBC Board Meeting

### *Summary of Secretary's Minutes from the 1/11/01 Board Meeting*

Chairman Lori called the meeting to order at 7:40 after those present had eaten. The members present included Chuck, Lori, Tom and Bruce.

**Treasurer's report:** as of December 31, we have \$667.65 in savings and \$426.15 in checking. We also have \$189 in pending checking deposits, mostly memberships, etc. We also have \$50 in pending expenses for LPUS memberships due to triple combos. All this gives us a grand total of \$1232.80 in assets.

**Membership:** 54 members currently.

**Publicity:** Ron is trying to get permission to have our upcoming training at the Independence Institute on a Sunday.

Approved \$50 to help pay for the LP booth at the Wasatch Gun show, in February at the Boulder County Fairgrounds in Longmont.

We are looking for a new coordinator for the monthly dialogs.

## *Libertarians Care* (continued from page 2)

things get done our way. The "right" moral choices are being determined by which side outnumbers the other. It is basically gang rule when the majority forces the minority to accept its moral choices because they are stronger in number.

A major reason for the Bill of Rights, and for attempting to structure government based on a consistent set of principles is to guard against the problem of "tyranny of the majority". Government's power should be limited in a way that it isn't possible for the majority to inappropriately impose their values on the minority. The role of government should be to protect people from each other, and not to use its force to allow one group to control the resources of another.

Libertarians think social programs can benefit from the same innovation and efficiency the free market has shown in producing other products. A program to "help the poor" may be considered a product just as much as a CD player can. The only difference this type of product has is that the person paying for the product is different from the person receiving it (but then that would be true if you bought a CD player as a gift for someone, you still wish the best product for the money you can find). People making charitable contributions do tend to receive something in return, mental satisfaction or some other feeling which motivated them to be charitable in the first place. The better the "charitable product", the greater the sense of satisfaction (how many people get a sense of satisfaction after paying taxes?).

We've seen how much better free market systems produced goods than the communist systems, what reason is there to think if given a chance it won't do a better job of producing "charitable goods"? Exactly how or why are they magically different? The same arguments about money wasted on marketing, duplication of effort between competing organizations that some people made against capitalist production of goods are being made against the free market of social programs. Those arguments are just as wrong in this case as they were proven to be in the other for the same reasons.

Some people label libertarian views as "simplistic" or "naive" since we expect society to work without the government needing to force it to work. It always seems odd to suggest that views held by someone like Milton Friedman, who received a Nobel Prize in Economics, could be "simplistic" views even if you don't agree with them. This viewpoint usually comes from a lack of true understanding of libertarian ideas, usually a "sound bite" model of libertarianism. We feel that on the contrary, most of those people are taking too simplistic a view of the complex, chaotic, free market "ecosystem". Just as it is difficult for man to successfully control all the complexity of a natural biological ecosystem, we think it is just as difficult for

him to attempt to control a human "ecosystem". The same chaotic processes that produce the evolution of natural systems are also at play in human systems.

The general rules can be defined, just as they are in the computer "life" simulation program, but then complex behavior which is hard to predict and control comes into being. People too often ignore the unintended side effects which occur while tinkering with a complex system. They see only the results of what they *did* do, and aren't aware of what they then *prevented* from happening. Every resource expended on a government backed project is a resource that *wasn't* expended on some other, unknown project. (Perhaps the extra few dollars taken in tax money someplace prevented a research project from being funded that would have lead to a cure for cancer.)

Some people complain that the free market system doesn't "have a heart", that it is based around greed and selfishness. The real truth is that the free market basically reflects the values of those within it. People are free to pursue whatever goals they wish, whether they are monetary or non-monetary. Everyone acts in their own self interest, even when that "self interest" is the desire to fulfill their wish to help people. If people are spending their resources entirely on superficial materialistic concerns, that is representing the free choice of those people. The free market doesn't "require" them to do so. The free market is simply an efficient tool to let people coexist and pursue their own dreams. It is a tool that can be used to pursue both noble and destructive goals, but like other tools it in itself is neither good nor evil. It is the use which is made of it and the values of those using it which should be questioned, not the tool itself.

People who desire to help others need the resources to do it, and see a system that doesn't give them those resources without effort as being bad. This contradicts the nature of a free society where people shouldn't be able to force their goals and values on to other people. Everyone is free to attempt to persuade other people to share their goal and has the same opportunity others do to try to direct resources towards their own cause (whether it's AIDS research, or whatever).

For more discussion of the proper role of government:

Understanding the Libertarian Philosophy: "What is the proper role of government in a free society?"  
<http://www.frii.com/~bwg/under.html>

Helping the Poor  
<http://www.frii.com/~bwg/help.html>

"The Law" by Frederic Bastiat:  
<http://users.netonecom.net/~gwood/TLP/ref/the-law1.htm>

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

Every Monday, Noon:

LPBC Weekly Lunch  
Hunan Garden  
949 Walnut St.  
Boulder, CO  
303-442-2772

Thursday, Feb 8, 6:30pm:

LPBC Board Meeting  
La Estrellita  
1718 Broadway St.  
Boulder, CO  
303-939-8822

Saturday and Sunday, Feb 10 & 11:

LP Booth  
Tanner Gun Show  
Denver Merchandise Mart  
Near I-25 and 58th St.  
Denver, CO  
Call Joe Johnson 303-604-9153(H)  
303-924-4051(W).

Saturday and Sunday, Feb 17 & 18:

LP Booth  
Boulder County Gun Show  
Boulder County Fairgrounds  
Longmont, CO

Saturday, March 10, 11am - 5pm:

"Right to Dance" Rally  
West Steps of the State Capitol  
Near Colfax Ave. and Lincoln St.  
Denver, CO

[www.planetxdenver.com/next%20event.com](http://www.planetxdenver.com/next%20event.com)

*For more info about all LPBC events,  
contact Lori Van Buren: 970-278-1158  
or visit our website:  
[www.lpboulder.com](http://www.lpboulder.com)*

## Are We Being Lied To?

*By Jon Ford*

In his capacity as editorial director of local libertarian-leaning book publisher Paladin Press, former LPBC secretary Jon Ford was recently asked by counterculture author Russ Kick to participate in an on-line survey. The question was, "Are we being lied to, and if so, by who and how?" Here was Jon's response:

Anybody who labels the ongoing centralization of political power and the increasing tax burden in this country as "progressive." "Medieval" is more like it! While their motives may be well-intentioned and the term "progressive" has such a benign ring to it, I wish they would acknowledge that they are perfectly comfortable with wielding a system that orders men

with guns (i.e., armed federal agents) to force other people to submit to their bidding. Never in their wildest dreams would they personally extract money from their neighbors at gunpoint to achieve a social goal. What makes it right, then, to send a surrogate to do so? Ultimately, it is never a wise idea to entrust the possession of firearms and the sole legal authority to use them in the hands of a small class of legislators and bureaucrats. Such a concentration of power historically attracts unsavory, ambitious people whose agenda will most assuredly be different from what is considered "progressive" these days. Perhaps Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis put it best in *Olmstead vs. United States* (1928): "The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachment by men of zeal, well meaning but without understanding."

## Liberty News

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Contributors: Bryan Griffin, Tom Parker, Bruce Waters, Lorene Van Buren

# Where Do You Draw the Line?

*By Ron Bain, LPBC Publicity Director*

The highest principle in libertarianism is the non-initiation of force. However, it seems that most Libertarians exempt all living species except one, Homo Sapiens, from that principle.

Some Libertarians see the entire world as either food or property. Others hold that the most evolved species, the primates and cetaceans, should be included in our principled stand against force. Some, like me, hold that mammals and perhaps other lesser species should not be killed except in self-defense.

I'm curious, where do you as a Libertarian stand on this issue? Where do you draw the line between species against which force may or may not be initiated?

In a recent discussion on the LPCO chat list, several points of view on this matter were offered. I contended that the use of force against virtually all species on the face of the Earth is contrary to libertarian principles.

Some who hold religious views believe that a deity created the current arrangement with humans at the top of the food chain. Others hold that rights, such as the right to life, are a direct extension of property: how can a creature with no property make a claim to rights? Still others reason that it's cognizance, awareness, sentience, sapience that characteristics creatures with rights: I think, I reason, therefore I have rights. A small minority, including myself, postulate that rights derive from the state of being, the act of living, that life itself denotes certain rights.

There is no point in arguing with those who hold religious beliefs on this matter; their beliefs are based on faith, not rationality, and cannot be reasoned away.

But to those who hold that property is the root of all rights, that the ability to work and create new things from raw materials, that to defend these acquisitions, is a characteristic of creatures deserving of rights. Most animals, however, have some sort of property: a burrow they've worked to dig; a nest they've worked to build; pets have the toys, bowls, beds and litter boxes we give them as property. To me, animals have property, including their hunting ranges and territories. And most will defend their property.

Some note at this point that animals hunt, kill and eat prey, so why should we be any different? It's the way of nature. But nature gave us a gift just as important as our omnivorous stomachs: the ability to reason, the ability to love, the ability to show compassion.

Yet it is that very sentience, that very sapience, that very ability to understand that we exist, that tomorrow and other days like today will follow, to remember past events, is what separates us from the animals. Perhaps this, then, is the characteristic of creatures who can rightfully claim rights.

But if we continue to hold to the notion that only those that use tools and technology, only those with superior intellects, only those with reasoning power have rights, then we leave a lot of questions unanswered that will someday have to be answered by science or philosophy:

What if we meet a technologically superior race of extraterrestrials?

What if evolution or human intervention allows primates or cetaceans to begin reasoning?

What if artificial intelligence is created by man?

What if science discovers that life is a unique energy form, unlike electromagnetic radiation, different from the weak or strong nuclear forces, more than just chemical reactions within a semisolid gelatinous mass of protoplasm?

When this day arrives, I am hoping that Libertarians will lead the way toward reason combined with compassion. When this day arrives, I am hoping that Libertarians realize that to live and perceive is to be worthy of the rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

## Erratum:

Unfortunately, in the January issue, the name of one of the Northern Colorado SAS Coordinators was incorrect. The incorrect name was "Sue Rehab." The correct name is "Sue Rehg."

## Libertarian Online Guide

f National Libertarian Party  
f [www.lp.org](http://www.lp.org)

f Colorado Libertarian Party  
f [www.lpcolorado.org](http://www.lpcolorado.org)

f Boulder County Libertarian Party  
f [www.lpboulder.com](http://www.lpboulder.com)

f Advocates for Self-Government  
f [www.self-gov.org](http://www.self-gov.org)

f Cato Institute  
f [www.cato.org](http://www.cato.org)

f Laissez Faire Books  
f [www.laissezfaire.org](http://www.laissezfaire.org)

f Libertarian TV Schedule  
f [www.missliberty.com](http://www.missliberty.com)

f Reason Online  
f [www.reason.com](http://www.reason.com)

f More Advocates for Self Government  
f [www.reliablehost.com/self-gov](http://www.reliablehost.com/self-gov)

## Join the Libertarian Party of Boulder County!

Choose one of these options:

\_\_\_ *Combo Package:* Join the LPBC, LP-CO, and LP-US for only \$41

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\_\_\_ Join the LPBC for the small annual fee of \$16

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City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Day Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Eve Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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If you wish to be a voting member, please sign and date the following pledge:

"I hereby certify that I do not believe in or advocate the initiation of force as a means of achieving political or social goals."

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Choose a membership plan above and enclose a check or money order payable to the LPBC for the amount listed. Send to: LPBC, PMB #427, 2525 Arapahoe Ave., E4, Boulder, CO 80302. *Thank you for your support!*

# Libertarian Party Directory

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[www.lp.org](http://www.lp.org)

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