



Liberty News

January 2001

a publication of the Libertarian Party of Boulder County

Libertarians Care

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

(part 1) by Bryan Griffin

Most libertarians sincerely wish to help people, they just feel that it is not the proper function of government. Most of us feel that despite good intentions the current large government is doing more harm than good to society. Individually we may share the goals or values of groups that advocate government social programs, however we disagree with the method of using the government to fund that activity for moral and practical reasons. Implying that those who don't wish the government to fund a particular program must be selfish is untrue and unfair.

Even if someone wishes society to help people, that doesn't necessary mean they wish the government to do so, as Frederic Bastiat wrote in "The Law" (<http://users.netonecom.net/~gwood/TLP/ref/the-law1.htm>)

A Confusion of Terms

Socialism, like the ancient ideas from which it springs, confuses the distinction between government and society. As a result of this, every time we object to a thing being done by government, the socialists conclude that we object to its being done at all.

We disapprove of state education. Then the socialists say that we are opposed to any education. We object to a state religion. Then the socialists say that we want no religion at all. We

object to a state-enforced equality. Then they say that we are against equality. And so on, and so on. It is as if the socialists were to accuse us of not wanting persons to eat because we do not want the state to raise grain.

Anyone who implies that those who are opposed to using the government to fund a particular social program must be "selfish" is using a misleading emotional propaganda attack rather than a logical argument to justify their position.

The government is simply an organization of people. In most ways it is not magically different or better than any private group such as the United Way. Having the government perform some charitable activity does not guarantee that it will do a good job. Simply assigning the government a task and instructing it to do the best job possible is engaging in wishful thinking and not dealing with the practical reality of bureaucracies and large organizations. Every private company attempts to do the best job possible. Yet the quality of the results achieved varies greatly, despite the best intentions. Government organizations are no different.

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The problem with this is the government operates as a monopoly. Even if you don't like the job its doing you can't choose to give your money to another organization that is doing a better job. Whereas if you hear of problems with a private charity you can give your money to another cause. (For example this happened in a well publicized way when the national United Way had problems). Its the nature of a monopoly, regardless of whether it is "public" or "private", to not need to be efficient or to provide the best solution. This is simply because no one has a choice to go elsewhere. We are stuck with whatever the monopoly hands us.

If a government appears to be producing *any* product (i.e., in this case making any effort at all to help a social problem), people are sometimes able to be persuaded its the best that can be done since they have no alternative to compare it to. Unfortunately it is not always possible to predict, or guarantee what would have happened if the government hadn't been given a monopoly on something. One useful thing to do is simply compare the results of free market production of goods in our country versus. the former Soviet Union.

Consider what might have happened if the government had been given a monopoly on building computers, and this year it came out with an Apple II-equivalent. People would be impressed since the Macintosh and Pentium-based PCs wouldn't exist to compare it to. Suppose the fellow who decades ago felt the entire world would only need a handful of computers had been in charge of a government monopoly computer department, where might computers be today? Are we settling for the equivalent of Russian computer technology in our social programs, when we could have the equivalent of American technology if we let the free market work?

We feel its most appropriate to create voluntary organizations (which are not monopolies) if you wish to help people. Bastiat wrote elsewhere in "The Law":

Because we ask so little from the law - only justice - the socialists thereby assume that we reject fraternity, unity, organization, and association. The socialists brand us with the name individualist.

Quotable...

"Nothing astonishes men so much as
common sense and plain dealing."

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson

But we assure the socialists that we repudiate only forced organization, not natural organization. We repudiate the forms of association that are forced upon us, not free association. We repudiate forced fraternity, not true fraternity. We repudiate the artificial unity that does nothing more than deprive persons of individual responsibility. We do not repudiate the natural unity of mankind

The *only* reason for using the government to perform some task rather than a private organization is because some group desires to force everyone else to support their personal cause and pay for it. We would rather allow people to fund whatever causes they personally support rather than imposing our choices on them.

Most government employees are not elected, so in practical terms handing a task to government Dept. X is no different than handing it to private Dept. X. Both types of departments are simply groups of people asked to do a particular task as well as possible, the only difference is having different employers. However, private organizations, including charitable non-profits, need to do a good job to stay in existence in the competitive free market.

Law is justice. And it would indeed be strange if law could properly be anything else! Is not justice right? Are not rights equal? By what right does the law force me to conform to the social plans of Mr. Mimerel, Mr. de Melun, Mr. Thiers, or Mr. Louis Blanc? If the law has a moral right to do this, why does it not, then, force these gentlemen to submit to my plans? Is it logical to suppose that nature has not given me sufficient imagination to dream up a utopia also? Should the law choose one fantasy among many, and put the organized force of government at its service only?

...

The Socialists Reject Free Choice

Please understand that I do not dispute their right to invent social combinations, to advertise them, to advocate them, and to try them upon themselves, at their own expense and risk. But I do dispute their right to impose these plans upon us by law - by force - and to compel us to pay for them with our taxes. ...

They need only to give up the idea of forcing us to acquiesce to their groups and series, their socialized projects, their free-credit banks, their Greco-Roman concept of morality, and their

(Continued on page 4...)

From the Chairman

by Lorene Van Buren

The purpose of the Chairman's column is supposed to be to keep the members abreast of what has happened and what will be happening within the party. I find it difficult to do this, mainly because everyone else is doing such a good job. As Membership Director and Webmaster, Tom Parker does a great job of keeping us notified of up to the minute news and he knows how to use a telephone to reach those who do not have internet access or email. Several members have been reliable in contributing articles to the newsletter and letter to the editor of other publications.

As I look back over the year 2000, I see some high points and some low points, both on a local organizational level and on a national scale. Some of the highlights of our year have been the fun we had together at the Boulder Creek Festival in May and the Bowl-a-Thon in August, the fellowship enjoyed at the Boulder Dialogs, and the outreach success we participated in through assisting at the gun show booths. Oh, and lest I forget, a personal high point was winning the leather briefcase in the door prize drawing at the Bill of Rights Day celebration. Low points must include the July election of officers when it was not possible to elect a Chairman, the loss of Steve Funk when he moved out of the area to pursue his career, and learning that Larry Gibes has some health problems and will not be able to be as active in the group as he would like to be.

On a national scale, the low point of the year in my mind is the depth to which certain U. S. citizens sank when they tried to steal a Presidential election, and the bitterness with which some citizens reluctantly accepted the fact that Bush won the election. Even Nixon had more grace and patriotism than Mr. Gore and his followers demonstrated.

But 2000 is now over. It is time to look ahead to the new millennium and what does the future hold? A lot of hard work, for one thing! As I alluded to last month, we need to quit being a debating society, or a small philosophical think-tank, and get busy being a real political party. To that end, there is an ad hoc committee of Boulder area Libertarians who are trying to come up with some new approaches to marketing our beliefs. An initial, and somewhat emotional, meeting was held in Lyons on December 2. Participants were given an opportunity to "blow steam" and "clear the air" to get prepared for the real work to come. The next meeting will be at the home of Ralph Shnelvar on Saturday, January 20, at 3:00 p.m. If you are interested in being a part of this group, please contact Ralph at 303-546-9355 or me; my new phone number is 970-278-1158.

HAPPY NEW MILLENNIUM!

From the Editor

by John Larkin

Thank you all (I think) for electing me as the new newsletter editor. The previous newsletter editor, Steve Funk, has moved out of state to follow better job opportunities.

Speaking of opportunities, I'll take this one to introduce myself to our readership. My first experience with "formal" libertarian principles was my senior year of college (that's three years ago). I took a class titled "Theories of Justice". Suprisingly for a college philosophy class, we read some Ayn Rand, and I was hooked.

I was first introduced to the Libertarian party by a couple friends in college, but didn't take much notice. I wasn't a very political person and didn't see the need to get involved. But after graduating (and moving on to the "real world"), I realized how intrusive the US government can be.

How annoying! There had to be other people who shared this belief. After doing some research, I stumbled across the Libertarian party web page. "Oh yeah", said to myself, remembering the introduction I had a couple years back. I found the Boulder County page, appeared at a Monday lunch, and was shortly elected newsletter editor.

One of the points I'd like to draw from above is lack of common knowledge of the party. I'd been a small-l libertarian for years, but had completely forgotten the existence of the big-L Libertarian party. The thought of the party didn't even cross my mind.

That's obviously changed now. And I think it's changing for the general public as well. In the previous election year, I think the party moved forward in making the word "libertarian" known by a lot of people. Whether they like that word is another matter, but at least they've heard it.

Quotable...

"It has long since come to my attention that people of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things."

-- Elinor Smith

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commercial regulations. I ask only that we be permitted to decide upon these plans for ourselves; that we not be forced to accept them, directly or indirectly, if we find them to be contrary to our best interests or repugnant to our consciences.

It seems that those who wish the government to fund *their* particular programs are the ones who are selfish. They wish to impose their choices and priorities on the rest of us. They wish to control what we do with our own money, they wish it to be spent on their projects rather than ours.

Even if the goals of those projects themselves are noble, the methods being used are at their root selfish. I don't have the option of giving my money to a homeless shelter I think is doing a good job versus handing it over to the government to support causes I may not value as much or agree with. The government can prevent me from saving lives by taking my money and wasting it rather than let me contribute to a medical charity I know is saving lives. The presumption is made that the Government knows best and has better uses for the money than the charities I would like to help.

Those who wish to solve social problems, yet wish to force us to fund *their* programs, are also in a sense being elitist. They are making the assumption that they are "right", that their solution is better and more important than whatever we wish to see done with our own resources, and they are sure enough of it to force us to go along. It seems natural for people to have confidence in their own ideas. It seems elitist for people to feel they have a right to forcibly impose their view of society on others.

But these organizers desire access to the tax

funds and to the power of the law in order to carry out their plans. In addition to being oppressive and unjust, this desire also implies the fatal supposition that the organizer is infallible and mankind is incompetent.

While society is struggling toward liberty, these famous men who put themselves at its head are filled with the spirit of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. They think only of subjecting mankind to the philanthropic tyranny of their own social inventions. Like Rousseau, they desire to force mankind docilely to bear this yoke of the public welfare that they have dreamed up in their own imaginations.

The government has a finite amount of resources (even if it took *all* our money it still would). Unfortunately there are an infinite number of worthy causes and approaches to helping people. There is always something more that can be done to improve the human condition, there is always another way to spend more medical research money. Deciding how to allocate resources to various causes becomes a moral choice because we don't have infinite resources available to hand out to all of them. It seems inappropriate to have the government legislating morality. Taxing people to pay for government social programs takes away value choices from individuals. Money I pay in tax isn't available to donate to a cause I agree with.

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?

[Find the answer to this question in Part 2, which will appear in the February issue of *Liberty News*]

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Every Monday, Noon:
LPBC Weekly Lunch
Hunan Garden
949 Walnut, Boulder, CO
303-442-2772

January 11, Thursday, 6:30pm
Monthly Board Meeting
Cheng's Garden
480 Dahlia Way, Louisville
303-666-8899

January 14, Sunday.
Second Amendment Sisters
General Planning Meeting
See announcement pg. 6

For more info about all LPBC events,
contact Lori Van Buren: 970-278-1158
or visit our website:
www.lpboulder.com

November LPBC Board Meeting

Summary of Secretary's Minutes from the 12/14/00 Board Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:25. Those present included Brian Griffin, Tom Parker, Lori Van Buren, Dave Baker, Chuck Wright, Ron Bain, John Larkin, Chris Yoder and Bruce Waters.

Last month's meeting minutes were approved as read.

Membership Report: Most new and trial members are probably coming from our gun show outreach, with a few from our website. Since the beginning of the year, we've had over 2000 hits to the website.

Publicity Report: Ron wrote to the Denver Post regarding the drug war, but hasn't seen it in print yet. He will speak at the TRT sponsored Bill of Rights Day get-together in Loveland.

Chairman's report: Lori is moving to Larimer County. She is now in transition, but will continue as chairman for the remainder of her term. The Creekfest materials will be transferred from Lori to Chuck.

New Business:

There was a motion to accept John's offer to be newsletter editor by acclamation. This passed unanimously.

Chuck spoke to the Boulder Optimists Club. Several people seemed genuinely interested in the Libertarian Party. He got a favorable write-up in their newsletter including the World's Smallest Political Quiz and the Noland chart.

Ron is planning a candidates and media relations class for late winter. It will include how to deal with the media. No date yet.

The next board meeting will be Thursday 1/11 at 6:30 pm at Cheng's Garden in Louisville

Libertarian Online Guide

f National Libertarian Party
f www.lp.org

f Colorado Libertarian Party
f www.lpcolorado.org

f Boulder County Libertarian Party
f www.lpboulder.com

f Advocates for Self-Government
f www.self-gov.org

f Cato Institute
f www.cato.org

f Laissez Faire Books
f www.laissezfaire.org

f Libertarian TV Schedule
f www.missliberty.com

Membership Report

Membership Director Tom Parker reports that as of December 31, 2000 we are at an all-time high of 56 members (50 "Voting" plus 6 "Contributing"). We also have 19 "3-month Trial" members.

Liberty News

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

Bill of Rights Day

by Lori Van Buren

At least 100 people gathered at the Pulliam Building in downtown Loveland on Friday, December 15 to honor the Bill of Rights and to express concerns about the future of our great republic. After a social hour, the event was opened by a fife and drum band. There were approximately a dozen speakers, including our own Ron Bain. Ron was one of the four quoted in the December 16 issue of the Loveland Reporter-Herald.

Introducing himself as a vegetarian pacifist who has never owned a gun, he went on to discuss his view of how the drug war has been an assault upon the Bill of Rights and other amendments to the Constitution.



Ron Bain speaking at the Bill of Rights Day

The event was sponsored by the Tyranny Response Team. Bob Glass of TRT noted that "These

words [the Bill of Rights] are not going to jump off the paper and protect themselves, that's our job." Several speakers included a call to arms within their presentations, pointing out that we need to be vigilant in protecting our rights and that there is room for everyone in this endeavor, and a need for many talents. Some of us may be good at marching in protest demonstrations, or painting signs for those who do march, or making the phone calls to let people know they are needed in the march, or writing opinion letters to the media to call attention to issues; whatever an individual's talent, there is a need for that individual's participation in our effort to

preserve the Bill of Rights.

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

___ Join the LPBC for THREE FULL YEARS for only \$45

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

Name: _____

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City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Day Phone: _____ Eve Phone: _____

Email address: _____

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!*

Ending the Drug War

by *Kevin Wilkerson*

Drugs are Bad.

The Drug War is Worse.

Nothing could do more to reduce the amount of violent crime in our communities than to bring an immediate end to the travesty of the War on Drugs. Prohibition has created the opportunity for enormous profits from illegal activity, and the result is the war zone our major cities have become. Drive-by shootings are largely turf warfare, just as they were during Prohibition. Think it doesn't affect you? Well, about a quarter of the burglaries in the U.S. are estimated to be committed by drug addicts stealing to support their habits which prohibition has rendered too expensive to finance in ways other than stealing -- or dealing. So if you are ever burglarized consider that it's 1 in 4 odds drug prohibition was a sort of motivational contributor.

And if you aren't convinced that ending the Drug War will reduce crime, consider doing it in the name of civil liberties and racial justice. Consider that while black Americans represent 12% of the population and 13% of the drug users, they account for 35% of the arrests for drug possession, 55% of the convictions for drug possession, and 74% of the prison sentences for possession. In other words, blacks are more likely to be arrested, more likely to be convicted if arrested, and more likely to be sentenced to prison if convicted. This points to clear racist enforcement among cops, among prosecutors, and in the courts. The result is that there are now more black males behind bars -- one in fifteen -- than whites, despite the disparity in percentage of population. Fact is, if you are white, use drugs, and are reasonably discreet, you are also reasonably safe. But if you are black, you are a target because our justice system has pinned a scarlet letter 'D' for "drug-user" on your chest. Where are all those liberal advocates of racial equality and so-called affirmative action when it comes to recognizing that the government they believe contains the cure for any social injustice is in fact the biggest hypocrite in the game?

Civil liberties have been an even more obvious casualty than racial justice. In 1994 alone, \$2 billion in property was seized in the War on Drugs, 80% of it from individuals who were never even charged with a crime, let alone convicted of one. This has even happened right here in Boulder: remember the Yellow Sub sandwich shop incident? Asset forfeiture laws are turning law enforcement into a growth industry. In fact, the FBI gleefully projected in 1992 that the value of its property seizures would increase by 25% each year over the

succeeding three years. It should be clear from this where its priorities lie.

Drug violators comprised 60% of the individuals sentenced to federal prisons in 1993. State prisons are operating at from 17 to 29 percent over their intended capacity, while federal prisons are 25% over capacity. In 1993, 26% of the prisoners in state and federal prisons combined were there for drug violations. About a third of law enforcement budgets are spent on drug "interdiction." The conclusion is obvious: we can effectively increase law enforcement and prison budgets by a quarter to as much as a third, simply by eliminating the laws against non-violent drug "crimes" that don't work anyway.

So am I talking about legalizing all drugs here?

Yes.

Political temporizing and compromising of principles is what's helped get us into this mess, and the main reason we seem unable to get out of it. If the Drug War breeds crime, racism, and the destruction of civil liberties, then ending it for one drug and not others is a short-sighted cop-out. And letting government keep some drugs illegal continues to legitimize its usurped authority to dictate what free people can choose to put into their bodies.

Besides, we made a determination as a society back in 1933 when Prohibition was repealed, that we can live with the effects of alcohol being legal. And there is not one presently illegal drug, not heroin, not crack, not cocaine, and certainly not marijuana, that carries the same level of negative physical, behavioral, and social consequences as alcohol.

Second Amendment Sisters

The Northern Colorado coordinators for Second Amendment Sisters will be holding a general planning meeting in Loveland on January 14. For more information, contact Dick & Sue Rehab, 970-203-1027 or email sas4liberty@aol.com, or Lori Van Buren, 970-278-1158 or email LyonsLori@juno.com. "Brothers" are welcome too!

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LIBERTY NEWS

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