Hugh Downs: Libertarians have all the “good ideas”

One of the country’s most respected television newsmen says that America has become a “one-party country” — and that all the good political “ideas belong to the Libertarians.”

Hugh Downs, co-host of the highly rated 20/20 news program, made those comments on the March 31st broadcast of Politically Incorrect, ABC-TV’s sardonic, late-night look at current events.

The program, hosted by comedian Bill Maher, features a panel of four generally non-political guests who discuss a wide range of controversial topics. Downs appeared on the show with actor Jeffrey Tambor, Internet talk show host Judy Tenuta, and Traditional Values Coalition spokesperson Andrea Sheldon.

While the suggested theme of the March 31st show was Heaven’s Gate cult, a spirited four-way debate quickly developed about abortion, education, and politics.

When Tambor made a comment about the Republican Party, Downs retorted: “I think it might be important to point out that this country is a one-party country. Half of that party is called Republican and half is called Democrat. It doesn’t make any difference. All the really good ideas belong to the Libertarians.”

THE DISCUSSION RETURNED TO POLITICS again later when Andrea Sheldon tried to defend the Republican Party as the “party of freedom” because it abolished slavery.

Downs responded: “They always point back to the party of Lincoln — you know, as though Lincoln would be a Republican [today]. He wouldn’t. He’d be a Libertarian.”

Libertarian Party National Director Perry Willis said Downs’ televised comments were part of a growing trend.

“First it was John Larouquette, then Clint Eastwood, and now comes Hugh Downs. I believe we’ll see more and more of this kind of statement as we grow larger,” he said.

Downs’ Politically Incorrect comments were not the first time the newsmen criticized the LP’s political opposition.

In a July 7, 1996 radio commentary, Downs said, “It’s more difficult to tell a Republican from a Democrat than it is to tell a Tutsi from a Hutu.”

And about the Libertarian Party, Downs said: “The Libertarian Party is the largest political party after the Republicans and Democrats. Elected Libertarians serve in offices all over the country. Every year, Libertarians gain more registered voters — defections from the two big parties. They also offer an alternative to the tired twosome.”

State LP News Briefs

MAINE: The Maine LP has joined that state’s Civil Liberties Union as plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the so-called “Clean Elections Act” — a new bill which drastically increases government funding and control of political campaigns.

The party’s opposition to the bill is “based on First Amendment principles and the threat of further government intrusion into political activity,” said Maine LP State Chair Mark Cenci. Despite the bill’s clearly unconstitutional nature, Cenci said, “All the other politicos were scared to publicly defend principle on this important issue.”

WEST VIRGINIA: A former vice chair of a GOP county party has defected to the Libertarian Party. Richard Kerr, formerly active in the Monongalia County Republican Party, has joined the LP because “if every Republican running for public office had been elected last year, changes would have been minuscule,” reported the Sunday Gazette-Mail (Charleston, WV) on March 23rd.

Kerr — who has a vanity license plate that says “AMEND X” in reference to the 10th Amendment — says he “will work hard for the Libertarian principles.”

WISCONSIN: An LP activist has been appointed to a special state government committee charged with reviewing the election process and making recommendations to the legislature.

Bob Collison, Chairman of the Metro Milwaukee LP, was appointed to the Joint Legislative Committee, which is examining ways to reverse the decline in voter participation.

“After listening to many ideas, I finally said the reason voter turnout was low was not the process — but the product the voters had to choose from,” Collison reported.

CALIFORNIA: The State Supreme Court has agreed to hear a lawsuit filed by LP activist Richard Rider, which seeks to block a city-bond financed $205 million expansion of the San Diego Convention Center. The case, Rider vs San Diego, “involves whether or not state laws should override city charter voter and taxpayer protections,” said Rider — in this case, whether citizens must have an opportunity to vote on “lease-revenue bonds” issued by the city.

“The city should have put the issue before the voters in March of last year, as we requested,” he said. “Win or lose, we have established the legitimacy of the issue.”
Hal Noyes was wearing a sign around his neck and passing out Libertarian Party leaflets in Orlando's Lake Eola Park when police told him to leave or face arrest. Noyes of Orlando figured he was protected by the First Amendment. He was in a public park exercising his right to free speech and not bothering anybody, he said.

When he ignored officers' warnings, the 51-year-old computer programmer was charged with trespassing, handcuffed and taken to the Orange County Jail, where he spent seven hours.

Noyes contends the September 1995 arrest was unconstitutional. He filed a lawsuit this week in Orlando federal court seeking unspecified damages, he said, "for being treated like a common criminal."

"He wants enough monetary punishment to send a clear message to city officials, Noyes' attorney, Steven Mason, said Wednesday.

City officials said they think the arrest was lawful. "The officer felt justified in what he did at the scene," said Mark Munsey, the city's risk manager.

Noyes was arrested because he was in a part of the park that was supposed to be reserved for an anti-crime march organized by Crimeline, said Orlando police spokeswoman Sgt. Cheryl DeGroff Berry.

But federal courts take a dim view of any restrictions placed on political speech in public places. The U.S. Supreme Court requires governments to provide substantial justification for any interference with the right of free speech.

The charge against Noyes was dropped a month after the arrest because the Orange-Orangeola State Attorney's Office decided that prosecution was unnecessary. According to notes in the case file, prosecutors thought the arrest was sufficient to remove Noyes from the park and penalize him.

Noyes said he thinks the police knew they wouldn't be able to prove he was arrested him so that he wouldn't disturb the event for Crimeline, which offers rewards to lipseine crime.

The arrest was Noyes' first, he said, although he has been active since the 1960s in protesting and trampling on people's rights.

Noyes said he was standing off the sidewalk and politely offering the leaflets to passers-by.

Libertarians attract members to platform
Reflect alternative to mainstream parties

By Colin C. Haley

TheMtWlesex New
Middlesex, Massachusetts,
February 16, 1997

The Orlando Sentinel
Orlando, Florida,
March 22, 1997

The Orlando Sentinel
Orlando, Florida,
March 20, 1997

TheMidlhzaen New
Middlesex, Massachusetts,
February 16, 1997

Libertarians attract members to platform
Reflect alternative to mainstream parties

Wise up about rights, Orlando

This is a great country. You can speak your mind freely. You can share your political beliefs openly.

Except one day at Orlando's Lake Eola Park.

On that day, a year and a half ago, an Orlando man committed the unreasonable act of trying to distribute Libertarian Party literature at the downtown-Orlando park.

A police officer who observed Hal Noyes "handing out fliers to people walking by" tried to stop that threat to public order by commanding the man to stop.

When Mr. Noyes wouldn't, he was charged with trespassing, handcuffed and taken to the Orange County Jail.

Reading Mr. Noyes' arrest report would be funny if it weren't so absurd.

Nothing indicates that Mr. Noyes was harassing anyone or creating any kind of disturbance, other than trying to pass out fliers to anyone interested. The pamphlets, by the way, spelled out the Libertarian position on criminal justice and crime control: incendiary stuff, such as "protect victims' rights" and "get tough on real crime."

The Orlando man even tried to explain to the officer that his actions were covered by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. That just seemed to confuse the officer further, forcing him to seek help from a park ranger who also seemed unfamiliar with the right of free speech.

But it didn't stop there.

According to Mr. Noyes, when the officer was asked what authority prohibited the distribution of fliers, the policeman responded that the city was "private property owned by the City of Orlando."

Gives new meaning to the words "public-private venture."

The city now is clinging to the defense that Mr. Noyes was in a part of the park reserved for an anti-crime march organized by Crimeline — as if the assembly of Crimeline supporters prevented the distribution of constitutionally protected literature.

No one contends that Mr. Noyes was acting in an unsafe or disruptive way, and the 51-year-old computer programmer says he even moved to the park's bandshell area after officers leading the march shoved him away. That's when he was arrested.

To no one's surprise, the charges against Mr. Noyes were dropped.

To no one's surprise, Mr. Noyes is seeking damages in federal court. He wants to send the city a clear message.

The message should be this: Read the U.S. Constitution.
Liberty Pledge News • April 1997

Reasons to vote this package down are many

Suppose someone offered you a business deal in which you had to work very little for the chance to earn millions. You would probably suspect it is too good to be true. But it is just too good to be true for the owners of professional sports teams. Cities across the country compete to offer them precisely that kind of deal. It is time for Franklin County commissioners want voters to extend on May 6.

The commissioners want to increase the county's debt by $33 million to fund a stadium and arena. They promise the project will revitalize Downtown, create jobs and attract professional sports and entertainment to Columbus. Like most political promises, however, these scenarios are also too good to be true.

This tax is the rare one in which people from across the political spectrum are making exceptional arguments against it. A cross-section of coalition from of people with often disparate views is working to defeat it. Voters must resist this tax.

HEATHER M. LOUGHLY

Why is this tax a raw deal for the people of Franklin County? It's bad for the same reasons stadiums built with tax dollars have been financially failures for other cities.

Some people favor an arena but fear the number of disingenuous flaws of this particular proposal. They point out that the taxpayers will be responsible for the inevitable construction overruns and likely operating deficits, while the tenants will bear none of these costs. Cost overruns have run into hundreds of millions of dollars in other cities, including Cleveland.

With no signed leases in hand, the county will also be at a severe disadvantage in negotiating leases, because team owners will know the county has already committed your money to building a stadium. Others in VAST oppose the stadium tax as the least example of corporate welfare. They say tax dollars should be spent on pressing social concerns, such as funding schools and the Central Ohio Truant Authority. They also argue that a sales tax hits the poor hardest because they would pay a greater percentage of income on sales tax.

I question the government's right to take away the right to pay a tax that will provide entertainment for a minority and earn profits for a few. Using the power to tax for a purpose as trivial as subsidizing professional sports is a severe misuse of power.

Voting to take your neighbors' money is a tax on a responsibility that should never be taken lightly. You may be able to afford the tax, but can your neighbor afford it?

The next time a government venture, money spent on stadiums is as wasteful as money spent on Air Force toilet seat improvements. Just look to the trash-burning power plant and the Santa Marta for examples of local government's financial savviness.

In a Heartland Institute study of subsidized stadiums, researchers said it is an "economic myth" that sport-arenas and stadiums create economic growth. In fact, the study concluded that tax subsidies to stadiums may actually increase property taxes and corporate welfare.

Heather M. Loughley is a member of the Libertarian Party of Ohio's Central Region Executive Committee.

El Dorado News-Times, El Dorado, Arkansas, March 18, 1997

Local resident elected to party leadership post

Rodney Wimberly has a new political office, and he said he hopes to use it to fulfill an old goal.

Wimberly was elected unanimously as vice chairman of the Libertarian Party of Arkansas on Saturday in a special business meeting at Little Rock.

The meeting was called because party chairman Robert Jones, of Fayetteville, moved out of state.

Former vice chairman Cliff Biedenharn, of Morrilton, was elected chairman and Wimberly was chosen as vice chairman.

Both were elected to two-year terms.

Wimberly said he was happy to be chosen for the office, and said he hopes to use his new post to guarantee ballot access.

"I hope to see that the Libertarian Party is on the ballot in Arkansas in the future," Wimberly said.

Biedenharn said the Arkansas Libertarian Party has tripled its membership since 1992, and continues to focus on membership growth. He said the party gives Arkansas "alternative viewpoints to those of established parties."

Jack-booted thugs? Law-enforcement agents provide much ammo to critics


Liberty Pledge News • April 1997

Ken Prazak

Valley View

Jacksons and a battering ram — shot him dead. Scott never pointed his gun at anybody. The motion: He owned a 200-acre ranch in Malibu, Calif., adjacent to a national forest that the feds were coveting. A so-called "confidential informant" had said that Scott was growing marijuana plants on his property. (The informant denies making such a statement.) The agents could find no illicit drugs or plants anywhere on his 200-acre property. To add insult to murder, the IRS is trying to take the estate of shrubbery for his landscaping business. Jones observed, "I didn't know a black man to have money in his pocket." He was only on trial because of overdue taxes. The IRS is trying to take money. Jones concluded that tax subsidies to stadiums are working to defeat it. Voters must resist this tax.

Why is this tax a raw deal for the people of Franklin County? It's bad for the same reasons stadiums built with tax dollars have been financially failures for other cities. Some people favor an arena but fear the number of disingenuous flaws of this particular proposal. They point out that the taxpayers will be responsible for the inevitable construction overruns and likely operating deficits, while the tenants will bear none of these costs. Cost overruns have run into hundreds of millions of dollars in other cities, including Cleveland.

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El Dorado News-Times, El Dorado, Arkansas, March 18, 1997
Libertarian sworn into office
Eggert to serve as justice of the peace in Bethlehem

By Kara Kenna
© 1997 Republican-American

A local woman has become the town's first Libertarian justice of the peace.

MaryAnn Eggert of Arch Bridge Road was recently sworn into office. She was appointed to a four-year term by Secretary of the State Miles Rapoport. Bethlehem has 10 justices of the peace.

Eggert said she wanted to be a justice of the peace so she could become involved in public service and to support the Libertarian Party. Eggert also is the state's first Libertarian justice of the peace, said her husband and former first selectman, George Eggert.

The Libertarian Party, founded in 1971, has grown to become the third largest political party in the United States, according to a party fact sheet. Libertarians favor rolling back the size and cost of government and eliminating laws that control people's personal choices.

Recent changes in state law allow third-party members to be appointed to this position, said Mary Young, a secretary in the state's office. She was unable to confirm if Eggert was the sole Libertarian justice of the peace.

As justice of the peace, MaryAnn Eggert can take acknowledgments, marry town residents, take depositions and issue subpoenas. When the state had a multi-tiered court system, she also would have been involved in the administration of the state's minor courts, George Eggert said. The office of the justice of the peace originated in England, he said.

MaryAnn Eggert, a retired supervising sergeant for the Litchfield County Court, used to be an unaffiliated voter before changing parties. "The Democratic and Republican parties are so much alike these days that you don't seem to have a choice," she said.

The Eggerts are organizing a Libertarian Town Committee. "We feel there are enough people interested," George Eggert said.

Jim Dexter, state chairman of the Libertarian Party, challenges Mormons to think independently.

"We seem to represent a radical difference," says Dexter. "Actually, we think we represent their true beliefs. Tobolster that contention, the Libertarians have started talking about the War In Heaven. You know, the one, in LDS doctrine, in which Jesus Christ and Lucifer vie for the right to lead mankind to the kingdom of God.

Let's see. Hardy cites no less than the Book of Revelations, Doctrine & Covenants, Pearl of Great Price and The Book of Mormon to demonstrate the Mormon belief that God's children would come to earth in a physical body and be tested before returning to heavens. "God knew His children would make mistakes [sin] while in mortality, and that the laws of eternal justice would prevent them from re-entering His presence unless the party of God was satisfied," Dexter says.

Christ offered himself as a sacrifice so that people could be free to choose whether to live the laws of God, Lucifer wanted none of this choice business, and sought to force mankind to live right. "Heavenly Father pointed out that in order for people to progress, they had to be free to choose for themselves and reap the consequences of those decisions, that it was contrary to the nature of God to deny man his 'agency,'" Hardy writes.

The question, then, becomes how anyone can seek to deny another free choice, if free choice is God's will? In Utah, there are dozens of examples. For instance, Utah County officials want to remove pornography from the shelves of Movie Buff's.

"I would not encourage anybody to read pornography," says Dexter. "But the purpose of liberty is to exercise responsibility, and you cannot if you have no opportunity to. God was so concerned about man having right, that the war in heaven went on. What we have in Utah is a total denial of agency."

Just to clear up the first question anyone asks in Utah, Dexter is a non-Mormon import to Utah. Hardy is LDS. Both see the obvious validity in trying to bring Mormons around to their way of thinking. "We've got to learn more about the religion and the church's hierarchy to make an approach," Dexter says.

An approach not unlike that of the Democrats, who sent emissaries seeking a kind of seal of approval from the LDS Church. No one expects the church hierarchy to go back and politically redistribute the wards again, but it would be one way of gaining membership in the minority parties, which are all but fading from view.

Unlike the Democrats, however, the Libertarians haven't slipped from grace. They were never there to begin with, although they did get enough votes in the November election to retain ballot status.

Like a developing country, though, the Libertarians want more than a little grain. They want the LDS Church to say it's OK to vote Libertarian. They want Gov. Mike Leavitt to say, yeah, this is the party that really believes in states' rights. They want to win an election. Any election.

"And that will happen right after we convince Gordon Hinckley that we are the party of the church," says Dexter. "Without an approval, we're not gonna get very far."