

tanstaaf!

there ain't no such thing as a free lunch

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Mid-State Activism Hits New Peak

On Tuesday, June 16, five TLP members and one spouse spoke at the Metro Council public hearing on Mayor Fulton's proposed 1981-82 budget. This represents a 200% increase over our participation in last year's hearing!

We argued that not only was the proposed 33% property tax increase unnecessary, but that an 85% cut was possible, and we specified the spending cuts that would allow this.

In justifying our proposed cuts, we used the same standard -- "vital, essential services" -- that the Mayor used in justifying his proposed spending increases. In contrast to his "status quo," how-much-more-should-we-spend approach, however, we used the "start from scratch," how-much-of-this-is-really-necessary approach.

Our recommendations included: (1) eliminating the vice squad and putting victimless crimes at the lowest possible enforcement priority, for a savings of \$6 million; (2) removing parks and libraries from the Metro budget, letting them be run and funded by private and civic organizations and neighborhoods, for a savings of almost \$10 million; (3) ending the \$2½ million subsidy to the MTA, while also deregulating taxi service and legalizing jitneys and shared-cab rides; and (4) ending the \$8 million kindergarten program and using cross-age and peer tutoring to increase classroom size and achievement, using the total savings to subsidize the attendance of poor children to alternative kindergartens and passing along an \$8 million savings to the taxpayers.

We also recommended stretching out the budget process, making the detailed budget breakdown available to the Council and the public more readily and sooner, so that intelligent budget decisions and public hearing input are more likely -- avoiding "meat-ax," across-the-board cuts, which give department heads an excuse to eliminate wanted services rather than cutting fat or non-essentials -- and rejecting the false choice between higher taxes and "sacrificing the kids" (by not paying for a few more teachers).

Roger Bissell presented the general proposal on behalf of the Nashville Tax Alternatives Committee. He was backed up with detailed facts and figures by Christine Saum (parks and libraries), Dave Converse (the schools), and Jimmy Jones (crime). Ralph Kirkland spoke earlier on an independent basis about the false choice and the questionable spending in the budget proposal, and Tom Lundy (who identified himself as an LP spokesman) presented some miscellaneous suggestions and a call for an immediate hiring freeze and 20% across-the-board spending cut at the end of the hearing.

Even though we distributed NTAC brochures at the hearing -- thanks to Ty Bissell for cutting and folding! -- two of the three newspapers still goofed up our affiliation, saying that four members of the local LP group spoke (when actually five did, but only one was explicitly identified with the LP, and four were explicitly linked to NTAC). Even so, the Suburban News gave us good coverage. They had by far the most in-depth coverage and even-handed treatment of both the statist and libertarians, giving prominent mention of Dave Converse's remarks on the alleged improvement in achievement scores in the government schools.

TV and radio coverage was generous. Not only was the hearing broadcast on WDCN-TV, but we appeared on the evening news on the three main stations, as well. The next day, WPLN-FM (the public library station!) repeatedly did bits on their hourly news about the tax revolt being led by your editor! (Also, Roger was interviewed during the previous weekend by WSM-TV and WNGE-TV for their evening news programs, after he put out a news release about questionable spending and difficulties in getting to see the budget.)

We have compiled our speeches, together with other remarks on the budget process, into a critique called The NTAC Papers. Its sections are entitled "Pre-Emptying Our Priorities" (with thanks to Perry Boling for some of the content), "Time Squeezes, False Choices, and Meat Axes," "Things That Just Ain't So" (liberal media bias in favor of higher taxes and spending, as evidenced in their distortion of facts and figures), and "Starting from Scratch" (our basic proposal). The other speeches are included as appendices to the main body of the critique.

A copy of the NTAC Papers is available with a \$5.00 donation to NTAC, 4415 Lone Oak Rd., Nashville, Tennessee, 37215.

The Council ended up making enough cuts in other departments to give the school most of what they wanted, and to retain twice-weekly garbage pickup, and still pass a no-tax-increase alternative to the Mayor's proposed budget. The School Board was apparently satisfied enough to abandon plans to call a special referendum for a property tax increase, which left the Mayor (who had been egging them on) high and dry. Not to be outdone or upstaged, however, Mayor Fulton has just suggested that garbage pickup be limited to once-weekly (as he originally requested), so as to give Metro employees a 3% pay raise. (Poor people, they've been so patient. Who are we to deny them a measly little pay raise? Sure, let's let the garbage pile up a little longer. Never mind that the Public Works director suggested that curbside pickup would allow much cheaper twice-weekly service. After all, what about the elderly having to carry their garbage out to the curb? Never mind the possibility of helpful neighbors or building allowance into the system to allow for backyard service for the few who really need it. When you smell service cuts in order to punish the people for opposing tax increases, ignore all else. Blank out.)

A distressing note: we six libertarians were the only people speaking at the hearing against the proposed tax increase. Hopefully, it was only because the proposed increase was relatively small, compared to last year. Unless the economy improves and tax revenues increase, we'll only have a few months to find out, because next year's tax increase proposal will be considerably larger, unless Mayor Fulton gets his hands on an alternate source of tax dollars. And that brings us to...

An ominous note: many of those speaking at the hearing called for a local income tax to take the burden off the "regressive" sales tax. Between this and the growing push for a state income tax, we are going to have our work cut out for us during the next several years.

It is imperative that we run candidates for state legislature in 1982 who are opposed to granting local option income-taxing power to the big cities and who are opposed to a state income tax. We must also be prepared to show why present state and local spending is too high and is actually harmful to the people of Tennessee (as opposed to the special interests of the state and city employees).

Our next issue will (definitely) deal with the issue of how many and what kind of candidates we should be running here in Tennessee. Should we qualify people for the ballot who aren't willing or able to make a "full-fledged" campaign effort, but are willing to let their name be available as a libertarian alternative? If so, how can we get the maximum benefit out of their "paper" campaigns? Stay tuned for details.

NOTICE -- NOTICE -- NOTICE

The July 5th TLP Executive Committee meeting, originally to be held at the home of Phil and Myrle Carden, has been relocated to Ralph Kirkland's house, at 1307 Gartland Avenue (only several blocks from the original site), and will run from 10AM to 5 PM.

Battling the Bloated Budget (City of Memphis, That is)

by Perry Boling

Jim Forrester, Don Webb, Kittle Boss, Chris Mazza and Perry Boling spent something like 70 person-hours during the month of May going over the mammoth 6-volume City of Memphis proposed operating budget submitted by the Mayor. (Mayor Chandler had warned Memphis citizens that they must accept another tax increase or face the loss of "vital, essential services.")

We submitted a nine-page report to each member of the City Council ten days prior to their vote on the issue, the substance of which specifically itemized some \$10 million in non-essentials (from the standpoint of defense of life and property), plus about \$3 million more in highly questionable areas, plus suggestions as to apparent excesses in pay increases and pensions which had to remain unspecific due to our lack of detailed breakdowns.

Perry Boling testified before the Council at their hearing prior to the vote. He charged them not to accept the "irresponsible priorities" offered by the Chandler administration. He told them it was inexcusable to either raise taxes or sacrifice jobs and services that people consider essential as long as such non-essential, special-interest-serving expenditures remained in the budget.

The Council wound up increasing property taxes by 48%, which amounts to a total increase in property taxes (city) of 39% over a two-year period.

Our report had emphasized attrition as "the only humane" way to trim the largest item in the budget -- payroll -- and the Council did wind up eliminating most current vacancies as we had suggested (though not necessarily because we had done so). We have emphasized that it is crucial that such vacancies be eliminated throughout the year, as they occur -- that this must not be merely a one-time phenomenon. We plan to keep in close contact with individual members of the Council to make certain this point is not ignored.

While we are not convinced our efforts had any practical, concrete effects on the outcome, we do believe we have gained the attention of Council members and, to a limited extent, the media. Also, members of a number of conservative organizations -- Moral Majority, Roundtable, We the People Forum, Women's Christian Temperance Union, Concerned Citizens for Better Government, and Young Americans for Freedom -- became aware of our efforts and eagerly sought copies of the fruits of our labor.

As a result of this, we "copyrighted" the document and made it readily available -- subject to credit being given for its source -- with the further result that it was widely circulated on the grass roots level. A member of a local anti-tax group, Pat Mason of United Citizens Against Oppressive Taxation, sat in on some of our sessions and offered suggestions and support. This group circulated our report widely in both white and black communities.

√ An interesting sequel, while probably not directly attributable to our efforts, was a veritable outburst by Council member Bob James, which happened at the Executive session of the Council the day following the vote. A witness to the event tells me that James (who has previously been a rubber stamp of the Administrations wishes) told his fellow Council members that they were never going to be able to rise above ignorance in dealing with the city budget unless they were able to obtain more information about the operations of the various departments. (The Council is wholly dependent on the Administration for information pertaining to the budget.)

√ The Mayor happened to walk in at about mid-point in James' remarks; but, despite the efforts of other Council members to shut him up, James continued to rail about the necessity of "getting into the operations of the various departments." The Mayor lost his temper and remarked (quoted by both newspapers) that the Council wasn't running the City, he was.

Later, the Mayor issued instructions to the Council that any information they desired should be sought through his office, not from the departments themselves; and that failure to comply with these instructions could result in removal of any Council member who was in violation. Though a couple of Council members tried to pass this off -- "I don't think he really meant what he said." "I'm sure we can come to some mutual understanding." -- it is clear that these remarks were not well received by even the more liberal members of the Council.

In order to understand why James said what he did, my witness to the event called me later to ask if our group had been putting pressure on Bob James. We had not been, and I'm not sure we can take any credit for the event at all. (But perhaps his conscience is hurting him. In the past he has been particularly hostile to the libertarian position. Perhaps this is because he discerns the truth in it.)

Finally, I asked the Council office to furnish me with a cassette tape recording of the meeting in question. I was told that the entire meeting wasn't recorded, because they "forgot to turn on the tape recorder." Nevertheless, I sent in \$2.50 and a blank cassette, and asked for whatever record they had. After two weeks, I have as yet received no response at all. -- P.B.]

Letters to the Editor

Ty and Roger,

Thanks a million for your hospitality. Bill /McDonald/ and I had a super time and hope you will be able to use the materials we presented. We're right in the middle of a census resistance up here. What a blast! See you in Denver.

Mary Lou /Gutscher/
/President, Ontario Unparty/

Dear Roger:

Thank you for putting me on your mailing list. Your June, 1981 issue was very encouraging, particularly the report on the successful activities of the Nashville Tax Alternatives Committee and your internal education program complete with recommended literature. I hope you are sending Tanstaaf! to other State Chairs so they can learn something about effective grass roots libertarian activism.

David P. Bergland
L.P. National Chair

Dear Roger:

Congratulations on being the new State Chair. I think everybody can stand it.

I enjoyed reading your newsletter. The listing of magazines, newsletters, journals, etc., is a very good contribution to "Learning About Liberty."

Alicia G. Clark
/Candidate, L.P. National Chair/

Other West Tennessee News

West Tennessee Libertarians met on June 17 at Jim and Sandra Forrester's home for pot luck supper, with 11 present. At a short business meeting, Shirley Lamar sought volunteers to help implement the West Tennessee development of a libertarian speaker's bureau to be available for local meetings to speak on political and economic issues from a libertarian perspective. Jim Danly and Bill Riggins agreed to study the manual and determine if there were specific functions they felt able to fill. The rest of the evening was spent conversing, and looking at Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, and finally, the moon! through Jim's telescope.

The next WTLF meeting will be on Wednesday, July 15, at the home of Perry Boling, 1674 Prescott St. (south of Kimball, near Lamar). Time: 6:30 PM for pot luck supper, meeting to follow.

Other Middle Tennessee News

The June MTLP meeting was attended by 13 people. We discussed the Metro budget, including the difficulties Roger was having in getting to see the detailed breakdown of proposed expenditures, and what he might do about it publicity-wise and practical-wise. (Suggestions from the group included a legal delay of the public hearing and a court order to see the documents. Luckily, these drastic measures were unnecessary. See "Middle Tennessee Anti-Tax Activism...") Five people volunteered to speak at the budget hearing in favor of tax and budget cuts. We closed the meeting by discussing several of the more obscure planks of the national LP platform and deciding to start a series of regular discussion on special topics from the platform, issues papers, etc.

On Sunday, June 14, Roger appeared opposite MNEA executive director Bob Bogen on WSIX-FM's "At Issue." They discussed tuition tax credits, with Roger defending only those aspects that also pertained to education tax credits (which he greatly preferred over the former). He argued from the basic meaning of the First Amendment freedom of association, that government-run, tax-supported education was unconstitutional. He also pointed out the contradiction in calling tax credits "subsidies" or "violation of the separation of church and state," since the money was one's own. (He failed to point out that not to receive a tax credit means that one really subsidizes the government schools; and that one's being forced to support the government schools, which use courses and methods in conflict with one's religious views, really violates the separation of church and state.) (A big help in preparing for this program was Ed Clark's White Paper on Education.) (Phil Carden made a tape of the program, and it may eventually be transcribed; but if you want a copy now, contact him at 607 N. 14th St., Nashville, 37206, (615) 227-2546.)

On Saturday, June 20, Roger appeared for one hour on Les Jameson's radio talk show on WLAC-AM. The chief topics were the Metro water-sewer controversy, the Reagan administration, and crime (especially, the drug laws and gun control). After the show, Jameson encouraged Roger to run for Metro Council, urging Roger to let him know when he decided to run, so that Jameson could set up another appearance and give him some help! (Several recent articles in Libertarian Review and Inquiry were important in preparing for this appearance, especially Glen Garvin's Inquiry article, "Crime and Punishment," as was the LP issues paper on "Controlled Substances." The figures on heroin use and drug-related crime in England vs. U.S., and the drastic drop in rape in Orlando following extensive training of women in using firearms, were compelling points in Roger's arguments.) (This show was taped, too. Contact Phil.)

On Wednesday, June 24, Roger, Ty, and their nextdoor neighbors attended a large "Join Hands With the Badge" meeting, which was ostensibly for the purpose of discussing the Neighborhood Watch program and learning new techniques on the part of homeowners and individuals for discouraging crime. Instead, it was repeatedly sidetracked onto the pet penal projects and political peeves by the Chief of Police and Mayor. As Glen Garvin, Bill Burt, Robert Poole, and others have pointed out, neither the liberal "solutions" (gun control and rehabilitation) nor the conservative "solutions" (increased patrol, faster response time, victimless crimes crackdowns, and harsher punishment) really work in reducing crime. (Indeed, some of them make the crime problem worse.) Instead, swift, sure punishment and community-organized self-defense are the only policies that have clearly been demonstrated as workable solutions to the crime problem. Yet, here were the Metro police chief and mayor repeatedly sidetracking us from the only salvation we poor slobs have, in order to discuss bail bond, drug crackdowns, capital punishment and the like. Roger finally got the meeting back on track by asking Chief Casey about the possibility of the JHWTB program acting as a clearinghouse for ideas discovered by the various neighborhood groups, and of a newsletter communicating these ideas to all the groups. The Mayor took that as a cue to remind us that this would cost money, tax dollars would only go so far, and without a tax increase (which we needed even if we didn't know it, so he was going to make us have one if it was in his power to do so) we would have to make some donations. Luckily, other sensible people in the audience suggested getting a cost-estimate and offering it on a subscription basis. The meeting continued in a more appropriate vein after the Terrible Two were politely, but effectively, rebuffed.

On Saturday, June 27, Roger, Ty, Becky, and Andrew Bissell travelled to Louisville for a look at the KLP Convention and a visit with Michael Emerling. Theirs was a full two-day convention with platform and constitution/by-laws proceedings (apparently for the first time), introduction of state legislative candidates, an appearance by National LP chair candidate Alicia Clark, election of officers, etc. Following his keynote speech, "Jesus Christ and Human Liberty" -- which he is making available to Norman Lear's anti-Moral Majority group, People for the American Way -- Michael and Roger spent several hours working on the abortion and children's rights issues, preparing a plank on child support to submit to the August national convention in Denver.

That same day, Phil Carden gave an interview to WTVF concerning the noises made by the Tennessee State Employees Association in favor of a state income tax. Unfortunately, his interview was not used on the news broadcast; fortunately, it was because Governor Alexander also came out in opposition to the proposed tax!

The July MTLP meeting will be held at 7 PM (dinner at 6), Monday, July 13, at the Western Sizzlin' on Gallatin Road in Inglewood. (PLEASE NOTE THIS NEW DAY AND LOCATION!) The meeting features a special discussion topic, "Women's Rights", based on the new LP issues paper. We have sent copies to several women from the religious and political communities and invited them to join us. After brief speeches or comments from those women who wish to make them, there will be a general roundtable discussion. Come join us!

TanstaafL Review
by Ralph Kirkland

Thomas Sowell rates the essay as the single-most important source of inspiration for his own work. Friedrich A. Hayek's "The Use of Knowledge in Society" is but one essay in Hayek's book Individualism and Economic Order. The reader should be shocked by the essay. Hayek calls the market process a "marvel." If the market were "the result of deliberate human design...this mechanism would have been acclaimed as one of the greatest triumphs of the human mind." Be amazed. Be enlightened. (Buy the book. Read the essay.) When you're in the bookstore, treat it like your credit card -- "Dont go home without !"

Tuscaloosa Regional Meeting Update

Phil Carden reports that the Region 13 meeting is shaping up nicely. It will be held during the Alabama State Convention from Noon to 5 PM on Saturday, July 18, at the Stafford Inn in Tuscaloosa. The price for the entire event is \$20/person, but no price for the regional meeting alone was available at press time. Alicia Clark will speak at the banquet Saturday night, Kent Guida will probably speaking at a brunch Sunday morning, and John Mason will probably be represented by someone else. Phil urges that as many potential delegates as possible attend this meeting.

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