

Sandhills Libertarian Gazette

A NEWSLETTER FOR LIBERTARIANS IN THE SOUTH CAROLINA MIDLANDS

Local Option Sales Tax Fails Again

The Local Option Sales Tax (L.O.S.T.) has failed again! This terrible bill - also known to Libertarians as the Local Unnecessary Sales Tax (L.U.S.T.) - would have allowed local governments to impose a one percent sales tax on their citizens, thus bringing the total sales tax to 6 percent. A referendum would have been required in each county, and part of the new sales tax revenue would be used to reduce property taxes a tiny bit. However, Libertarians opposed the bill, since it would still amount to a significant tax increase, especially for low-income families and the elderly. It would also hurt retail business sales and increase federal income taxes (since property taxes are deductible but sales taxes are not).

There was widespread legislative support for the L.O.S.T. In fact, both the House and the Senate passed versions of the bill. The House version called for 50 percent of the sales tax revenue to go toward rolling back property taxes, while the Senate preferred a 75 percent figure. Amazingly, the two chambers could not agree on a compromise. The House agreed to a 63 percent rollback figure, increasing over a five-year period to 71 percent, but the Senate fell short of the two-thirds vote needed to approve the compromise.

The L.O.S.T. idea first surfaced in late 1985. The original bill called for a variety of local taxes, including local income taxes. In early 1986, the Libertarian Party mounted an intensive petition drive against the bill. During the following months, Libertarians collected thousands of signatures throughout the state. Several Libertarians travelled extensively in order to distribute petitions. The bill died in committee that year.

In 1987, the Chamber of Commerce and local governments put more pressure on the legislature to pass the bill, and the House did pass it after whittling it down to just a sales tax. Two Libertarians spoke against the bill in January of 1988 at a Senate Finance Committee hearing. They were joined by three other spokesmen for groups opposing the bill. The Committee approved the bill, but the full Senate never got around to considering it.

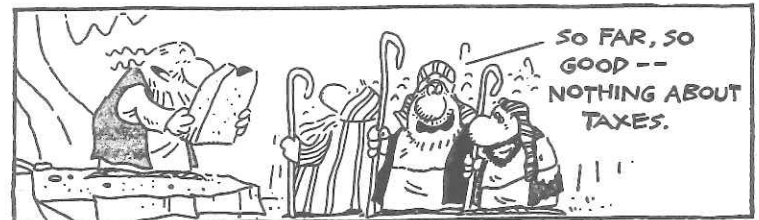
This year, Libertarians continued their opposition to the bill, and the S.C. Association of Taxpayers (a new group) also lobbied against the bill. It came very close to being enacted, since both chambers passed it, but, as described above, they couldn't agree on details. Thank goodness for

bickering legislators! If they ever start co-operating, we'll be in deep trouble.

The legislators can, of course, consider L.O.S.T. next year. Some political analysts doubt that they would do this in an election year, but cities and counties will continue to press for more taxing authority. Libertarians will have to be ready when it comes time to launch another anti-tax effort.

FRANK AND ERNEST

BY BOB THAVES



State Meeting to be Held on July 23

The S.C. Libertarian Party will hold a meeting in West Columbia on July 23rd, and everyone is welcome. The meeting will take place at Bill Griffin's house (see map on page 4) and will start at 1:30 P.M. Newcomers are invited to come ask questions and to meet a bunch of fellow freedom-lovers. Our meetings are always informal and friendly.

One item on the agenda will be the selection of delegates to the Libertarian National Convention to be held in Philadelphia August 31 - September 3. Since this selection will only take a few minutes, there will be plenty of time to discuss S.C.L.P. projects and other items of interest.

Bill has a swimming pool. If you want to take a dip, please come early and bring a towel and bathing suit. Swimming will not be possible after the meeting.

Join the
Freedom Movement

The Further Adventures of Dick and Jane

by John Harllee

It occurs to me that there are no libertarian children's books. Of course, there are many excellent children's books for libertarian children, but none with a specific libertarian slant. On the other hand, children's books full of statist propaganda are all too common.

I have, therefore, a few suggestions which anyone is welcome to. It should not be too hard to write a libertarian children's book; most children's books are quite short. The problem is getting it published and sold.

Here are some possible titles for the series:

Dick & Jane's Lemonade Stand: Dick is hauled in for not having a business license. Jane confronts the Board of Health and the sales tax collectors.

Dick & Jane Go To The Park: Spot is arrested for not being leashed and bites the dogcatcher.

Dick & Jane Ride On A Train: Amtrak manages to make their trip miserable.

Dick & Jane Go To A New School: They try a progressive school, only to learn it has no state license; the whole family gets busted for violating the truancy laws.

Dick & Jane Visit The Farm: Uncle Will explains that the U.S.D.A. is about to put him out of business and the farm, which has been in the family for generations, will soon belong to the bank.

Dick & Jane Make New Friends: Paco and Juana and their parents are deported for entering the country illegally.

Dick & Jane Build A Treehouse: They meet the building inspector who condemns the structure for having no indoor plumbing.

Dick & Jane Move To A New Neighborhood: After their home is condemned by the highway department for a new freeway, the family is forced to move.

The possibilities seem to be endless. Any suggestions on how to get this sort of thing into print?

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John Harllee is editor of the SOUTHERN LIBERTARIAN MESSENGER. He was one of the original members of the South Carolina Libertarian Party.

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NEWS BRIEFS

CAMPAIGN RESULTS -

While Tim Moultrie, a student at U.S.C.-Aiken, received only 84 votes in the North Augusta City Council election in April, his campaign apparently had an effect on the political climate there. Actually, he got 10 percent or more of the vote, depending on how you calculate it (one could vote for more than one candidate).

According to Moultrie, "The greatest success of my campaign was the fact that one week before the election, the mayor and council members were talking about a 25 percent property tax increase. However, on the evening of the election, when they discovered that I got more than a handful of votes, they announced that they were going to freeze taxes at the

current level. So, even if we don't win, we Libertarians can make a difference when we run for public office."

SUPPORT FOR CHINESE PROTESTERS -

Libertarians in Washington, D.C. joined a march from DuPont Circle to the Chinese Embassy on June 6. Me Me King was interviewed by the press. Many Chinese protesters rushed up to her, and her Statue of Liberty poster, to express thanks.

It is important for Libertarians to express support for Chinese protesters and others fighting government oppression. It's clear by now that President Bush won't do this. He's too interested in being friendly with the oppressors. Those murderers should be strongly denounced.

KARL HESS NEEDS HELP -

S.C. Libertarians are very fond of Karl Hess, who was influential in the formation of the Libertarian Party. Not only has he done a great job as editor of *L.P. NEWS* (the national L.P. newsletter), but he has twice come to Columbia in order to help us promote Libertarian ideals.

Now, Karl needs our help. After undergoing extensive cardiovascular surgery last fall, he was stuck with enormous hospital bills. He recently told me that he is now suffering severe financial problems as a result of these expenses. Anyone who can help should send a contribution to: Friends of Karl Hess, 8 Peyton St., Winchester, VA 22601. We need to keep Karl around for a long time!

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Editorial

Second Thoughts About Drug Laws

I would like to mention two things that shed some light on the drug problem in this country. Drug addiction is a serious problem, and drug-related crimes are on the increase. This has resulted in calls for stronger law enforcement efforts. President Bush and Drug Czar William Bennett believe that the "war on drugs" can be won with tougher laws, more police, banning certain types of guns, arresting and prosecuting more people, and throwing these people into overcrowded prisons that have no more room.

Lexington County Sheriff James Metts recently spoke at a meeting of the Lexington Medical Association, addressing an audience of about 90 physicians, spouses, and hospital officials. He mentioned that law enforcement efforts only affect the "outer crust" of the drug organizations. The hierarchy is so secure and secretive that it is impossible to identify and prosecute the higher-level persons. The only persons who ever get arrested are the "dummies" and the "fall guys" (his words). Metts asserted that government officials, politicians, and even judges have been bought by the unidentified drug kingpins, who will never be caught.

Sheriff Metts said that tougher law enforcement will not even make a dent in the drug organizations and will not cut down on the use of drugs. The only way to decrease drug abuse, he emphasized, is to rely on education, prevention, and strengthening the family unit. When asked what Drug Czar Bennett could do to help solve the drug problem in South Carolina, Metts answered "absolutely nothing."

Metts was also asked about legalizing drug use. He didn't endorse the concept but said that it might be seriously considered when people realize that law enforcement efforts will not work. He agreed that "It would certainly take a lot of the money out of it."

I was pleased that Metts had the courage to say some unpopular things. I spoke personally to him after the meeting. He reminded me that places where marijuana was legalized did not see an increase in marijuana use.

The second thing I want to mention involves gunshot wounds in children in New York City. I recently listened to an audio tape of a speech given at a medical meeting by Dr. Barbara Barlow, Chief of Pediatric Surgery at the Harlem Hospital Center in New York. Dr. Barlow mentioned that from 1960 to 1970, only two children age 16 or under were admitted to the hospital for gunshot wounds, but since 1970, about one youth per month has been hospitalized for gunshot injuries.

Dr. Barlow explained that the reason for this increase was a law passed in 1970. This law mandated that adults receive long jail terms if caught with controlled substances. As a result, drug dealers recruited children and teenagers to sell drugs on the street, since they aren't severely punished when they are caught with drugs. These young persons have to carry guns for protection, and gunfights often break out among them. Innocent persons sometimes get caught in the crossfire.

Dr. Barlow called for tougher gun control laws. Like others, she missed the point entirely. The real moral of the story is that tougher laws against drug use often make things worse rather than better. Laws don't do what their proponents intend to do - they usually have unintended consequences. It is clear by now that strict drug laws have resulted in a skyrocketing rate of violent crime, especially among youth. How long will it be before the lessons of the Prohibition sink into the brains of the politicians?

People have used drugs for thousands of years, and they always will. Until 1914, heroin was legal in the United States. Some persons abused it, but it was never associated with violent crime, and neither were marijuana or cocaine.

Legalization will not solve the drug problem, but it will help create an environment of individual responsibility which is needed to make solutions possible. The only way to fight drug abuse is to help children learn to respect themselves, their minds, their bodies, the rights of other persons, and life in general.

"Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it everywhere, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedies."

- Groucho Marx

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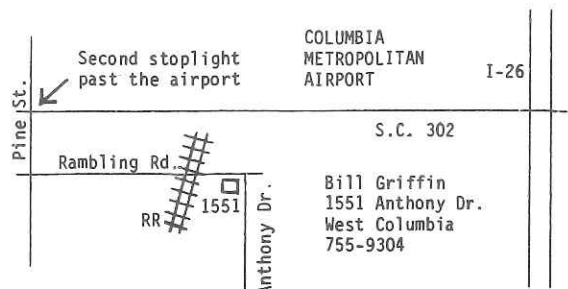
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