LP National Convention nominates
Harry Browne for president in '96

Browne vows to try to win entry into presidential debates; Jorgensen wins VP slot

With an overwhelming first-ballot victory, best-selling author Harry Browne won the presidential nomination of the Libertarian Party at their national convention this weekend.

His next goal: A ballot spot in all 50 states and an invitation to the televised presidential debates this fall.

In the week following the convention, two newspapers and two prominent political columnists urged Browne's inclusion in the debates.

Browne, 63, won more than 68% of the votes from the 600+ Libertarian Party delegates gathered at the Hyatt Capitol Hill hotel in downtown Washington, DC, on Saturday, July 7. He defeated challengers Rick Tompkins (who won 12% of the vote), None Of The Above (10%), Irwin Schiff (5%), and Doug Ohmen (3%).

In his acceptance speech to the cheering delegates and alive C-SPAN audience, Browne posed the question he said might change the direction of government once and for all: "Would you be willing to give up your favorite government programs if it meant you would never again have to pay income tax?"

If elected, Browne promised to immediately abolish the income tax and deliver "huge tax cuts now, huge spending cuts now, [and] a balanced budget now."

Again and again, Browne returned to the central theme of his campaign: "Government doesn't work. People everywhere recognize that government doesn't work. It doesn't deliver the mail on time; it doesn't keep the cities safe; it doesn't educate our children properly," he said.

"Government has failed. So we don't want to reform the federal government. We don't want to slow its growth. We don't want to improve the management of it. We want to reduce it to the absolute minimum possible," he said.

Winning the VP slot was Jo Jorgensen, 39, president of a software duplicating company in South Carolina.

Browne's campaign to be included in the fall's presidential debates won an immediate boost in the days following the convention.

- David Broder wrote in his nationally syndicated column on July 10: "Browne is articulate and quick-witted, and he'd undoubtedly draw votes if he could . . . muster enough support to be included in the presidential debates. That is a long shot, but there'd be some value in having 100 million Americans hear him . . ."

- An editorial in the Denver Post on July 11 stated: "As a party, the Libertarians have clearly earned inclusion in this fall's [presidential] debates. It would be fair to set 1996 debates between Clinton, Dole, and Browne as representatives of the only parties to meet the present yardsticks for national recognition."

- The Times-Herald Record (Middletown, NY) on July 9 wrote: "[Browne's] presence at the debate table would make for livelier . . . and more meaningful discussion."

- The Washington Post columnist Colman McCarthy wrote on July 13: "Harry Browne, well spoken and not sponging on taxpayers, deserves a place at whichever forum hosts Clinton-Dole debates."

Browne, a resident of Tennessee, writes an investment newsletter and is the author of nine books, including his recent campaign manifesto Why Government Doesn't Work, the #1 bestseller You Can Profit from a Monetary Crisis, and How I Found Freedom in an Unfree World.

The convention received considerable media coverage, with more than 50 newspapers, magazine, and radio journalists—and two separate camera crews from CNN—attending the four-day event. Stories about the convention appeared in most major American newspapers, including the Washington Post, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and USA Today.

The party's 800# received more than 10,000 calls during the convention, and calls continued to pour in at the rate of 250 to 500 a day during the following week.

Also at the convention, National LP Chairman Steve Dasbach was re-elected to office by a large margin, defeating challenger Gene Cisewski 58% to 33%. (NOTA won 9%.) Karen Allard was re-elected as Vice Chair without opposition, as was Treasurer Hugh Butler. Gary Johnson replaced John Famularo as LP Secretary.
Seeking Political Breakthrough, Libertarians Pick Harry Browne

Doomsaying Author of 70s Gets Party's Nod for Presidential Bid

By David S. Broder

Twenty-five years after its birth, the Libertarian Party yesterday began another push for big-league political status by nominating as its presidential candidate a man who made a personal fortune by predicting economic ruin.

Harry Browne, the 63-year-old, best-selling author of such books as "How You Can Profit from a Monetary Crisis," won an easy first-ballot victory over five rivals in voting by 605 delegates at the Libertarians' weekend convention here.

Jo Jorgensen, 39, a Greenville, S.C., computer software company owner, won the spot of vice-presidential candidate for the party that promises to radically reduce the federal government, abolish virtually all federal taxes and shut down both overseas military bases and the "war on drugs," in order to increase individual freedom.

The Libertarian presidential candidate won more than 900,000 votes in 1980, but in 1992 the party's nominee won only 291,000 votes, despite being on the ballot in all 50 states.

Browne and Jorgensen, in their acceptance speeches, insisted that the rebellion against "big government" and the other parties, by both young people and their parents, could make this a break-through year for the Libertarians, who argue that their platform would restore the Founders' concept of limited government.

"We are not alone," Browne told the cheering delegates and a C-SPAN television audience. "The American people are fed up with this wasteful, extravagant government. They are on our side now. We are mainstream."

Jorgensen said Republicans who promise smaller government and lower taxes "give us the equivalent of 1-900 sex. They tell us how much they want us and how good it's going to be. But when we hang up, we realize they've cost us a lot of money . . . and they're never going to come over.

Browne, a polished platform and television performer, said in an interview that his immediate goal is to show enough support in the polls that he is invited to join President Clinton, former senator Robert J. Dole and the nominee of Ross Perot's Reform Party in this autumn's presidential debates.

"If I'm at 10 percent, they won't be able to keep me out," he said. "If I'm at 1 percent, I shouldn't be included. It won't be easy, but it is possible, and no other single step would do as much to establish our credibility."

Advises the party already has ballot position in 33 states and expects to qualify in all the others by late summer, Browne, who has been campaigning for the nomination for two years with personal funds, said he is about to pass the $1 million mark in fund-raising, adding, "If we can raise $10 million, we can be a major force in this election."

During a debate Friday with his rivals for the nomination, Browne conceded that "we have only a very, very long-shot chance of winning, but if we get out of the 1 percent class and get 5 percent, we will get past the hurdle of irrelevancy and draw tens of thousands of new members to our cause."

The Libertarians, who held their first meeting in a Denver living room in 1971, appeared to be poised for a breakthrough in 1980, when nominee Ed Clark won almost a million votes—five times the previous high mark. But support slumped during the years of the "Reagan revolution," and in 1992, Ross Perot's self-financed independent bid drew almost 70 times as many votes as went to Libertarian Andre Marrou.

Browne said he hopes to draw a clear distinction between himself and Perot, if the Dallas billionaire runs again. "He wants to get under the hood and tinker with the engine," Browne said in the interview. "I want to throw the engine out and replace it with a much smaller motor. He just wants to manage big government better. We would go much further than that."

In his speeches Friday and yesterday and in the interview, Browne outlined a series of positions which he said "you won't hear Bill Clinton or Bob Dole trying to steal:

- End the federal income tax and all other "direct government taxes, and replace them with nothing. Existing tariffs on foreign goods would be enough to finance the remaining federal functions, he said, adding, "I will challenge every American to decide if he would give up his favorite government program in return for no income tax the rest of his life."
- Provide a missile defense for the United States, while scrap all offensive weapons and overseas bases.
- We can be more secure, at much lower cost, if other nations understand we are not threat to their security and we will not intervene in their struggles," Browne said.
- End Social Security, substituting "a firm contract with private insurance companies" for current recipients and telling those now paying Social Security taxes that those deductions will stop and they can start their own retirement plans. Browne also said he would phase out Medicare and Medicaid, but had no specific proposal in that area.

On the abortion issue, Browne said he would end any federal role, either in financing or restricting abortions, and leave any regulation to the states. "This issue is not emotional," he said, "because science has not determined when life begins. My personal view is that we should err on the side of caution, so I think abortion is wrong, but as president, it is none of my business."

Browne gained attention in the 1970s with bestsellers and lectures predicting runaway inflation, a deep recession or depression and a monetary crisis—and prescribing ways a shrewd investor could withstand the general run-up. His views were frequently ridiculed by professional economists, and he acknowledged yesterday that "I learned in the 1970s you can't predict the timing of events. I still think we're headed for trouble, but it might come next week or 20 years from now."

Browne said in the interview that he had not bothered to vote between 1964 and 1994, "because I could see no difference between Barry Goldwater and Lyndon Johnson or any of the later Republican and Democratic nominees. But "I became aware of the change in the political climate of the country," with even conventional politicians like Clinton acknowledging that "the era of big government is over."

Radio ads for Browne's campaign will start here Monday, "so the national journalists will know we are serious," he said, and expand across the country as finances allow.

One thing he will not do, he said, is accept federal matching money for his campaign. "I do not believe in welfare for individuals, corporations or politicians," Browne said.
Tax foe tapped as party choice on first ballot

By K.L. Billingsley

The Libertarian Party yesterday nominated Harry Browne its 1996 candidate for president of the United States.

Mr. Browne, 63, of Franklin, Tenn., is the author of "Why Government Doesn't Work," a core theme of the party's annual convention winding up here this weekend.

"The Democrats and Republicans come before you at election time and tell you what you want to hear — that they've changed their stripes," said Mr. Browne in his acceptance speech. But the candidate, who carried 416 of the 605 delegates on the first ballot — 68.7 percent of the vote — charged that it was all talk and no action.

"We Libertarians are going to get the federal government out of everything not specified in the Constitution," he said. "We want huge spending cuts now. We want huge tax cuts now. We want a balanced budget now.

The candidate has promised to slash federal spending by 50 percent the first year and immediately balance the budget. Libertarians, according to a party statement, "favor dramatically shrinking the size and cost of government and eliminating laws that stifle the economy and control individuals."

In an interview with The Washington Times, Mr. Browne challenged voters to give up their favorite federal program in return for the Libertarian alternative. "Among them know our alternative exists."

Some wore three-cornered hats and came festooned with buttons bearing slogans such as "There is no government like no government!" Young people with nose rings jostled with businesspeople in tailored suits. A brightly clad skater bore a Harry Browne sign at Union Station.

Speakers at the convention included Nadine Streeter, president of the American Civil Liberties Union, columnist Doug Bandow and Joseph Sobran, Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform, and Clifford Thies, whose topic was "Why Christians Must Be Libertarians." Marshall Fritz of the Separation of School and State Alliance challenged Libertarians not to support the educational vouchers favored by some Republican candidates.

The Libertarians' vice presidential candidate will be Jo Jorgensen, a mother of two who heads a software firm in South Carolina. A Libertarian since her college days at Baylor, where she read Ayn Randroid's "Atlas Shrugged," Mrs. Jorgensen rejects the idea that a vote for a Libertarian is a wasted vote.

"A vote for a Republican is a wasted vote because they won't deliver a smaller government," she charged that the Republicans and Democrats amounted to a "one-party system" and predicted that Generation X voters would eventually give the nod to Libertarians.

The Libertarian presidential candidate is Libertarian presidential nominee

Delegates don't come out of a mold

By Chris Whitley

Across the hall from where Libertarians were nominating Harry Browne for president, a sign advertised a 2 p.m. seminar titled 'Hemp and Politics.'

One delegate had a copy of the Bill of Rights on his red T-shirt, covered by the words, "Void Where Prohibited by Law.

Four of the six Libertarian nominees failed to get as many votes as "None of the Above." The Libertarian Party Convention is not a typical political gathering, and party loyalists laugh it.

"We're home," said Dan Karlan, a delegate from Wolvick, N.J., who sported a blue suit and mesh loafers. "Among Libertarians, Libertarians can let down their hair or let down their guard."

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Delegate Dan Karlan

The nation's third-largest party, now 25 years old, prides itself on its diversity of opinions almost as much as it mantra about decreasing government. Delegates here have pressed for issues such as tax reform and a balanced budget, as well as legalizing drugs and outlawing prescriptions.

Sam Treynor, a delegate who owns a truck dealership in Houston, said the debates have been much more interesting than any at the Republican or Democratic conventions.

"We're having a lot more fun than those Republicans are," Mr. Treynor said. "At least on the floor, we are."

He said some newcomers had trouble understanding the traditional "None of the Above" entry on the Libertarian ballot, which this year got 10 percent of the vote.

Carl Vassar, an engineer from Billingsley, Mont., is leading the state's delegation and petitioning to get on the ballot himself as a candidate for state senator. He said the laissez-faire atmosphere around the convention hall is indicative of the party itself.

"Some of the people here are very casual," Mr. Vassar said. "We don't feel like we have to have in any one way as long as we respect the rules of the convention."
David S. Broder

Live-Wired Libertarians

If America's future is really going to be found on the Internet, then the party to watch in the 21st century may well turn out to be the Libertarians.

Liberals and right-wingers, it may be, think of programmers as bookish, fringe types. But a weekend of interviewing at the Libertarians' presidential nominating convention here showed unmistakably that a high percentage of the 600-plus delegates work and play every day in that newest of electronic universes.

James Lark, who teaches systems engineering at the University of Virginia and serves as an adviser to a growing network of eight Libertarian organizations on and off the campus, said the affinity is natural. "People who use mathematically based systems think logically, and Libertarianism is a nice, clear set of principles, logically linked."

Patricia McCune, an employee of the Denver-based TCI cable news channel, said her company has found a surprising hit with a weekly program called "Damn Right," which it bills as the first Libertarian cable show. "I love these people," she said. "They are different, but they have a lot to say. They are creating a community of their own on the Internet, and the rest of the country will come into it."

"Interest" doesn't begin to capture the oddball flavor of this 25-year-old party, which expects once again to be on the ballot in all 50 states, with its presidential candidate, Jo James Lark, who teaches systems engineering at the University of Virginia and serves as an adviser to a growing network of eight Libertarian organizations on and off the campus, said the affinity is natural. "People who use mathematically based systems think logically, and Libertarianism is a nice, clear set of propositions, logically linked."

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Convention With a Difference

If nothing else, Harry Browne, the Libertarian Party presidential candidate, knows a historic moment when it arrives. It helped that he caused the recent national nominating convention in Washington, Brown declared to the party faithful: "Like Bob Dole, Bill Clinton, Phil Gramm and Pat Buchanan, I've qualified for matching funds. But unlike [them], I do not believe in welfare. Not for politicians, not for individuals, not for corporations. So I am the first presidential candidate in American history to qualify for matching federal campaign funds and refuse to take them."

As they have a habit of doing every four years since 1972, Libertarians again have found a candidate of honed intelligence and decent moral purpose. Browne, an investment adviser and author, has a clearheaded loyalty to the party's principles of minute and uncerver government, personal freedoms and responsibilities, and allegiance only to government roles cited in the Constitution.

Libertarians, with 125,000 registered voters and 15,600 dues-paying members, have a noticeable political edge over third parties, from the Greens to the Iowa-based Natural Law Party: They have breadth that appeals to left, right and disenchanted why-diners. The party attracts the left, right and disenchanted why-diners. The party attracts the oddball flavor of this 25-year-old party, which expects once again to be on the ballot in all 50 states, with its presidential candidate, Jo

Richard Burke's story hints at what could come. The 32-year-old, self-employed Beaverton, Ore., small-systems phone and computer consultant cast his first vote (back home in Nebraska) for Ronald Reagan, but found too many of his fellow Republicans "very intolerant." As a student at Portland State University, he joined the Democrats "because of their predictably managed and managed conventions would be as fearlessly diverse. The same for the television networks and sponsors of this fall's debates. Harry Browne, well spoken and not spoiling on taxpayers, deserves a place at whichever forum hosts Clinton-Dole debates.

To keep out the Libertarian would be yielding to the might of the two main parties, twins in their zeal to pass state laws in limiting ballot access to third-party candidates. At the least, Browne's quickness of mind would raise TV ratings and keep the public from flicking to "Geraldo" reruns or more pundit analysis of low voter turnout.

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