

# LIBERTARIAN LIFELINE

## Sacramento's Annual Budget Ballet

Once again, the citizens of California watched in disgust as the Big Five sat down in the smoke filled rooms of power to fight over our money. For the first time in almost a decade, however, they are not fighting over how to deal with all the red ink of deficit spending to support a bloated bureaucracy, but how to properly divide a four billion dollar surplus—four billion dollars ripped from the pockets of California taxpayers.

There has never been a more compelling argument that we are overtaxed than watching these scoundrels play statewide Monopoly with money that doesn't belong to them. The California Constitution mandates that the Legislature submit a budget to the Governor by June 15, and that the governor signs a budget by the end of the fiscal year, June 30. Governor Wilson has consistently ignored this constitutional requirement almost every year he has been in office.

These politicians have violated the very Constitution they swore to uphold and defend—and yet no one holds them accountable for it. In 1992, it took Pete Wilson until September to sign a budget that incorporated one of the largest tax increases in the state's history, and forced the state treasurer to issue IOUs to pay the government's bills, IOUs that were later ruled illegal. Every legislative session since 1992 has seen both the Assembly and the Senate introduce bills that would punish these bodies and the governor for failing to meet these deadlines, bills that would deny the legislators their paychecks and their per diem allowances for every day the budget is late, and even a few bills that would fine each lawmaker up to \$200 per day for every day they fail to meet their duties. But none of these bills has ever made it out of committee to the floor to be voted on by the full body. And if ever one did, you can be sure of a quick veto from the governor.

It has been suggested in these pages over the years as we watch this annual dance of the dimwits in Sacramento that the State of California should take a

cue from the federal government and shut down operations whenever a budget cannot be passed on time. In addition to providing an incentive to do the

jobs they were elected to do, such an action might also show the taxpayers that we *can* get along quite well without government, and may well popularize the idea Libertarians have been promoting for decades—that government is too big and needs to be cut back down to size. Perhaps the notion of a part-time government would even catch on. If we can get along without government for three days, or five days or even two weeks, we can surely get along without it for good.

Imagine the savings we would realize if government offices closed for two weeks out of each month. Or perhaps for three weeks. Of course, some government offices must stay open continuously, and CalTrans needs to keep working to maintain our roads and highways, but a great deal of government programs have no business being full-time operations.

At one time in the distant past, California did indeed have a part-time government. The legislature was in session for only part of the year, and the rest of the time, the Senators and Assemblymen actually had to go back to their districts and work for a living just like the rest of us. They had *real* jobs to maintain, and their duties in Sacramento were considered their part-time jobs. Hard as it may be to believe, back then those politicians actually passed a budget on time, every time, and finished all their business on schedule so they could close up their offices and get back to work at home.

There is no reason they cannot do so today, except that we now have a full-time legislature made up of professional politicians, few of whom have ever held down any other kind of job outside of politics. And of course, since they have no other means to support themselves, don't be surprised if they vote themselves another pay raise this session, just as they did in 1997. After all, the economy is booming, the budget is in the black, and there's enough money to go around for all of them.

The only problem is that it isn't their money. It's yours. Do us all a favor and give these crooks a fair performance evaluation next November. If they can't do the job they were elected to do, then fire the bastards. ▣



# Time of Struggle for Liberty

by Jeffrey R. Sommer

I was at the meeting of the Marin County LP on the first of August, where a Republican candidate for the Assembly had been invited to speak. That was not unusual; in fact the gentleman struck me as both intelligent and sincere. Nice to know not everyone in the G.O.P. is rabid! But what shook me was an opinion expressed by one member of the LP who said that "realistically," all the LP was good for was an influence on the larger parties.

That was the most defeatist attitude masquerading as "common sense." I won't have it. The Libertarian Party was not founded to be an "influence" or a lobbying group for individual positions. We are a Party, ideologically different from every other party, and we will only consider ourselves victorious when we are wielding the power that makes, upholds, and enforces the laws. Period. No other party will do!

It is the mistaken impression some have that we are the G.O.P. Lite, or some other such

nonsense. People who can't tell that we are unique and important need to be told it by those who know it to be true. We have won political office in the past and intend to win far more in the future.

We will never retreat, no, never; we will press on, winning higher and higher offices, gaining more and more for the Party, because we *must*. America needs us. But that is not the worst of it!

The fact is, that most LP candidates are beaten from the start. Convinced that they could never win, they run "paper campaigns" which accomplish nothing. This is worse than stupid: if you don't believe you can win, why run? And of course the inevitable defeat justifies the original pessimism. This is no way to run a party!

If you don't have the guts to do what needs to be done, get out of the way. I want winners on my team, not a pack of whiners and losers. Never forget, one victory is worth ten thousand protests. So what I want is Libertarians with the Will to Win! If the other side seems too tough, keep looking: there's always a weakness to be exploited. If you believe in the struggle, the victory is attainable. When I run, I fully intend to win. If I do not, I will find out why, root out the causes, and try again. I want all LP candidates to do the same.

Consider the difference between victory and defeat for us: it is no less than the difference between freedom and subservience. Our ancestors gave their very lives to attain the freedom we so stupidly let slip away. How can our children look up to us if we do not give them a nation as promising as the one handed to us? Who among us would hand his child a rock instead of a sandwich, and whine that it was just too much trouble to make a sandwich? How much worse to let our beloved country slip into a Socialist Police State because we couldn't be bothered to save her!

I do not want those who merely say "I believe," but those who say "I will fight!" □

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# East Bay LP Plans Huge Campaign Picnic for October

Mark your calendars for the big East Bay Libertarian Party Picnic on Saturday, October 10, 1998.

We have reserved the Pioneer Picnic Area of Garin Park in Hayward for the all-day event, which will feature many of our candidates for statewide office including Gubernatorial candidate Steve Kubby, Secretary of State candidate Gail Lightfoot, Attorney General candidate Joe Farina, State Treasurer candidate Jon Peterson and our candidate for U.S. Senator, Ted Brown. There will be food, drink, music and fun for the entire family.

Garin Park is located off of Mission Boulevard in Hayward, south of Industrial Parkway. The September issue of the *Libertarian Lifeline* will have more information on this special event.



## The General Charges

**The War on Drugs is as lunatic as it is general**

by Lila Hoffman-Thome

There's something good. Generals and good horses have in common: an internalized, heartfelt need to go forward, to achieve the desired goal. Gen. Barry McCaffrey exhibited that trait recently before and during his tour of the Netherlands, which he visited ostensibly to learn more about its drug policies and their results. In reality, the trip was a prolonged photo opportunity with sound, as the old war horse said, in effect, "Great Caesar's ghost! We're not about to stop this drug war!"

On another level, I suspect he intended to alert persons advocating drug decriminalization and legalization inside the United States that he knew all about the efforts of other nations — he's not ignorant — and they didn't work worth a fig newton. Why, this fired up horse was barely out of the stable before he reared up and declared the Netherlands program an abysmal, unmitigated, and totally abject failure with such assurance that the Netherlands Embassy almost cancelled his trip.

Vaguely sensitive to the possible inappropriateness of his remarks, especially prior to embarking, he began wrapping words in protective cushioning which softened, but didn't change, their meaning, as Generals, like horses, don't have much of a reverse gear. However, it is, after all, one thing to believe that the drug program in The Netherlands is a dud. It is something else to prove it — with numbers. And, so, the General also had numbers.

His said the homicide rate in the Netherlands was 17.58 per 100,000, more than double the U.S. rate. He had numbers that proved the Netherlands youth were tumbling into drugs as fast as they tumble into puppy love. And, then, General McCaffrey came splendidly home.

Later, in *The Washington Times* the Ambassador to the Royal Netherlands Embassy wrote to correct the General's egregious numerical mistakes. Paul Armentano from the National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws explained that the Netherlands homicide rate is actually 1.3 per 100,000, a tiny fraction of our own homicide rate. Armentano also wrote, "Gen. McCaffrey's data misleads the public by comparing the percentage of American teens who use marijuana *monthly* to the percentage of Dutch teenagers who have *ever* tried marijuana."

Armentano concluded, "If Gen. McCaffrey believes that America's policy of arresting and jailing more than 12 million marijuana users since 1965 is more effective than the Netherlands' system, he should find no need to distort the facts." But, by then, the General was in bed and the show was over. □

Lila Hoffman-Thome has written a weekly political column, *What I Think*, for the *Internet Herald* since 1994. Free subscriptions are available via electronic mail. Point your browser to <http://www.iherald.com>.



# Soak the Rich

By Katherine McKay

“Soak the rich ‘til there ain’t no more rich.”

These words leered down at me from the facade of Ashkenaz in Berkeley. Of course, I discount most of what I hear anywhere in the People’s Republic of Berkeley (the last bastion of socialism in the Western world outside of Cuba). But the sentiments expressed in Berkeley are only a more extreme form of envy and resentment encouraged by Marxism but to be found elsewhere in our society as well – perhaps not in the majority of the population, but in the most vocal portions.

There is no doubt that Marxism has been the most pervasive influence on world economic and political systems in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. To those who lived under Marxist regimes and are now freed from them, Marxism is consigned to the dustbin of history, but it still has charms for naifs in affluent societies who imagine that its prescriptions can be applied without the massive abuses of concentrated power. Marx insisted that “behind every great fortune is a great crime,” a bald assertion unsupported by evidence. In our present age of cybermillionaires, it is hard to see what great crime has been committed by entrepreneurs who have grown wealthy by supplying consumers with what they want. Still, envy-mongers continue to press for punitive taxation on them to benefit certain privileged groups.

One explanation for the resentment of the rich is the “fixed pie” view of economics. The world view of many closed societies (sometimes inaccurately called “primitive”) is that the amount of wealth in the world is fixed, so that anyone who increases his share has done so at the expense of others. A pervasive, watchful envy prevents any one member of these societies from amassing a great amount of wealth, because social sanctions will require him to distribute much of it as gifts to others less wealthy. Americans, living in a society where rich and poor alike have benefited from increases in productivity due to human ingenuity, have no excuse to think the same way. “A rising tide lifts all boats” applies not only to the stock market but to the economic condition of most of the population. But in Berkeley and in much of the media, it still seems to be assumed that the economic pie is indeed fixed, and that the rich have therefore stolen their large share from the rest of us.

Far from embracing the simpleminded Marxist view of disparities of wealth, Americans in recent polls have opined that the country benefits from rich people, that they create jobs for the rest of us by their invest-

ment and spending, that there are about the right number of rich people in the country, and that riches come from personal effort and ambition. The U.S. is viewed as an opportunity society, where anyone willing to work hard and take risks can become rich. In recent years, many people have joined the ranks of the wealthy because of the increasing rewards given to education and mental skills. This has also caused the face of the millionaire population to change: from men in late middle age to a much younger group of both men and women. Because of the open nature of our economic system, resentment and envy of the wealthy is not as pervasive as in more closed economic systems. But in the media, the rich are portrayed as a predatory class in need of taming. Studies of prime-time TV shows depict business executives – especially those heading large corporations – as more likely to commit crimes than any other occupation, including career criminals. Any time Congress seeks to reduce some of our taxes, the first thing critics cry is that the reduction would disproportionately “benefit the rich,” an objection seen by them as unanswerable. Their slogan is always: “Make the rich pay their fair share of taxes.”

Do the rich now pay less than their “fair” share of taxes? In 1996, according to the IRS’s records and the Tax Foundation’s research, the top 1% of wage earners paid 30% of all income taxes paid, and the top 5% paid 49%. This is approximately twice as high as those earners’ percentage of all income earned. Not only do the wealthy pay progressively higher taxes on their incomes, they get progressively fewer tax credits and exemptions, which are phased out completely at the highest levels.

A common proverb, found in many cultures, is that he who dig a trap for another is likely to fall into it himself. America’s first peacetime income taxes were a blatant attempt to soak the rich for the benefit of the middle class, but they soon rebounded onto the middle class, which has struggled under an increasing tax burden ever since. When Congress passed the tax of 2% in 1894, it was a tax on only the top 2% of the population. The Supreme Court ruled that the tax was unconstitutional and required it to be apportioned among the population by a definite standard. However, when the 16<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed in 1913, Congress authorized itself to enact an income tax without apportionment and without restraint. Eight years thereafter, the top rate had gone to 77%, and after World War II it was put at more than 90%. These attempts to soak the rich and to force them to pay for the two world wars backfired into the proliferation of tax shelters designed

solely to protect them against such punitive taxation. To the extent the rich were successful in evading taxation, the middle class had to take up the slack. Then the alternative minimum tax was instituted to make sure that those wealthy people who had many legitimate deductions paid at least some taxes. Because the major exemption still allowed under the AMT – the personal exemption – is not indexed for inflation, by 2008 the majority of taxpayers paying the AMT will have incomes between \$50,000 to \$100,000 (in present dollars) – not the “rich” the tax originally targeted.

A progressive tax system punishes people for success. Punitive taxes force the wealthy either to work less, resulting in fewer jobs created for the rest of the population, or seek unproductive tax shelters instead of investing their money in companies that create jobs. Either way, productivity and wealth creation of the country suffers. Likewise, when taxes are reduced, business booms as disincentives that hampered it are removed. In the 1960’s, when Kennedy reduced income tax levels sharply from their wartime highs, the economy expanded greatly, and in the 1980’s, when Reagan lowered the tax rates (which had crept up again), the same thing happened. Last year’s capital-gains tax cut resulted in almost 50% higher tax revenues for the government than had been projected before the cut, showing that the previous capital-gains taxes had been counterproductively high. The punitive excise tax on “excessive” payments made out of retirement accounts to those who managed to save large amounts during their working years was also repealed, a step in the right direction.

**“... A country cannot improve the lot of its poorest citizens without creating more jobs and raising pay levels. Conversely, the taxes, regulations and subsidies government uses to redistribute income inhibit economic growth. A government that steals from the rich to give to the poor will impoverish all its citizens.”**

The rich, in pursuing their own financial self-interest – namely, making money for themselves or their companies – create jobs, raise the standard of living generally, and provide new products through research undertaken for the profit motive. This occurs

because the businesses they run or invest in become successful and profitable only if they serve the consumer well.

J. Paul Getty made his first million in the oilfields when he was a young man, then he “retired” to live a life of comfort and consumption. His father, also a self-made successful businessman, persuaded him that the rich person has a responsibility to make his wealth benefit the community by initiating businesses that provide services and goods and create jobs. The younger Getty returned to the business world with such zest that he eventually became the country’s richest man. His creations of jobs and products are well known, and his later creations of art museums and foundations for the study of art have benefited thousands more. If he had been “soaked” until he was rich no more, none of these would have come into being.

The gap between the wealthiest and the poorest levels in our society is greater than in most other countries and, as has often been pointed out, is growing – due to the wealthy becoming wealthier. It does not at all follow from this that the poorest people are becoming poorer. Indeed, as the U.S. has become a richer nation, the lowest levels of society have prospered, relatively speaking. Part of the problem is that, when poverty is defined relatively, as a percentage of the population, many fairly well-off individuals will be included in the lowest category. But when poverty is defined in absolute terms, as amount of disposable income, the U.S. is very far down the scale of major industrial nations in terms of percentage of population living in poverty. (The Netherlands and Italy are the two top entries, each with more than twice the percentage of their population living in “poverty,” defined thus, as America.) Americans living at the government’s definition of the poverty level are richer than 90% of the world’s population. Of “poor” people in the U.S., 40% own their homes, over 50% own a car, 95% a TV, 60% a VCR, 60% a microwave, and 50% have air conditioning. Contrast this with actual grinding poverty of peasants in the third world, for instance, and the distinction between rich and poor becomes smaller.

Thomas Donlan, in a January issue of *Barron’s*, writes: “... A country cannot improve the lot of its poorest citizens without creating more jobs and raising pay levels. Conversely, the taxes, regulations and subsidies government uses to redistribute income inhibit economic growth. A government that steals from the rich to give to the poor will impoverish all its citizens.”

“Soak the rich ‘til there ain’t no more rich” is a clear recipe for creating a third-world country out of an

**continued on page 6**

affluent one. In the view of the envy-mongers, equality is more important than absolute prosperity, and a society in which all people are equally poor is preferable to one in which people are unequally wealthy, even if the "poor" are more well-off than they would be in the egalitarian society. In the past, a large enough populist vote could, for a while, pick the pockets of the wealthy, who would have little recourse other than tax shelters, also under attack. But in our present global economy, when capital can be moved around the world at a keystroke and many countries are deliberately designing themselves to be tax havens, the wealthy have alternatives to being plundered. They can take their money out of a country with punitive taxation (in spite of capital restrictions) and leave the rest of us to pick each other's pockets. In order to keep these wellsprings of prosperity at home, we need to consciously resist falling for the anti-wealth rhetoric and try to educate those who spout it as to the real role of wealth in a society.

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## Futile 'War on Parking Meters'

A new proposal introduced in the California legislature would regulate the accuracy of city-owned parking meters — launching a "War on Parking Meters," warned the Libertarian Party of California. "We've seen the War on Poverty, the War on Tobacco, and the War on Drugs," declared Libertarian state chair Mark Hinkle. "Now we can add parking meters to the list."

The legislation, introduced by state Senator Quentin Kopp (I-San Francisco) as an amendment to SB 1676, is intended to curb a major growing problem in California — inaccurate parking meters. Or so Kopp would have Californians believe.

"There has been no uprising over inaccurate parking meters," noted Hinkle. "Cities are upgrading from old mechanical meters to more accurate electronic meters. Many already have. This bill is yet another example of politicians trying to solve problems that don't really exist."

Kopp was moved to propose the amendment because of a study conducted by an 11-year-old girl for a sixth-grade science fair project. Ellie Lammer of Berkeley discovered only a 6% accuracy rate among 50 parking meters she tested.

"Ms. Lammer's study merely proves that the city of Berkeley paid for some bad parking meters," concluded Hinkle. "But it's no reason for the state of California to take action."

In fact, Ms. Lammer's study found that 66% of the meters cheated the city—giving drivers more time than the meter was supposed to.

"Never mind that Berkeley's meters were mechanical and over 20 years old. Lawmakers realized drivers weren't paying their fair share and have found a way to recoup that lost revenue," said Hinkle. Berkeley generates \$2.8 million annually through its meters, according to the city's Parking Citation Center. KQED Radio reports that Berkeley collects another \$2.9 million from parking citations. Fifteen percent of the city's annual budget is derived from parking revenue.

Kopp's bill would give counties the authority to test and certify the accuracy of city-owned parking meters, and that's precisely why the Libertarian Party objects. "Cities should be responsible for the accuracy of their own parking meters. If meters cheat a city out of revenue, then the city needs to investigate. The state and counties have no business interfering," said Hinkle. "Politicians need to park their desire to pass superfluous legislation and concentrate on protecting individual rights," declared Hinkle. "The Libertarian Party of California calls for an end to the 'War on Parking Meters.' Time has definitely expired on silly laws and unwanted government intrusion." □



# Marin LP News

In July we held two fundraising drives. Due to your generous donations, we have generated a 10% increase in membership over this last quarter. Thanks.



Come join us in August in the Twilziewop booth at the Renaissance Pleasure Faire in Novato. The Faire lost its final battle last year when the EPA gave the go ahead to the cutting down of the sacred old growth oak grove.

Join us at the final running of the Faire in Novato to be a part of a live setting with actors of the Elizabethan era. Look for us at the Faire during the weekends of August 22-23 and 29-30. To get to the Faire, take Highway 37 to the Black Point Forest near Novato. There are plenty of signs, so you won't be able to miss it. To purchase tickets in advance, call 1-800-52-FAIRE.

Then on October 11th, come to a live perfor-

mance of Tad Mosel's "The Impromptu" at the Mill Valley Masonic Lodge, Bldg.. #19 Corte Madera Avenue. When their scripts fail them, their true natures come shining through. "Repeal the Ban" awards will be presented after the play to local businesses which have supported the rights of smokers. Preview our full color "Repeal the Ban" posters at our website at <http://www.sirius.com/~pagangas>.

Schedule for August and September:

August 1st: General Meeting at 1 pm at Villa Ramana, 901 B Street, San Rafael.

August 27th: Sonoma-Marin table, 5 pm to 9 pm, Santa Rosa Farmers Market at the Santa Rosa Town Square.

September 5th: General Meeting at 1 pm at Villa Ramana, 901 B Street, San Rafael.

September 19th: Northern Regional Meeting, 1 pm, Mill Valley Masonic Lodge, Building 19, Corte Madera Ave., Mill Valley.

Contact numbers:

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Website <http://www.sirius.com/~pagangas>

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

(For those joining the LP as a voting member)

*I hereby certify that I do not believe in nor advocate the **initiation** of force as a means of achieving social or political goals.*

Signature(s) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS **AUGUST**

**Tuesday, August 18, 1998 7:30 p.m. East Bay Region General Meeting** at Ricky's Sports Lounge and Steakhouse, 15028 Hesperian Avenue in San Leandro, near Bayfair Mall. If you missed ABC News reporter John Stossel's remarkable one-hour documentary "Sex, Drugs and Consenting Adults," here is your chance to see this incredible report.

**Tuesday, August 25, 1998, 7:00 p.m. Oakland/Berkeley Libertarians** in the 16th Congressional District will meet to discuss regional issues at the Albatross Pub in Berkeley, located at 1822 San Pablo Avenue (near the corner of University and San Pablo). For more information, contact Jeffrey Sommer at (510) 537-3212.

**Thursday, August 27, 1998: Sonoma-Marin Informational Table**, 5:00 pm to 9:00 pm, Santa Rosa Farmers Market at the Santa Rosa Town Square.

**Wednesdays at 6:00 p.m. Free The People 2000 Initiative Organizational Meetings.** Coco's Restaurant, 330 E. Hamilton in San Jose. Join the Free the People organizers every week to help draft another ballot initiative to repeal the State Income Tax. For more information, visit the FTP2000 website at <http://www.freethepeople.com>.

**Wednesdays, 6:30 p.m. UC Berkeley Libertarians** meet in Room 206 of Dwinelle Hall on the campus of the University of California in Berkeley. Help us welcome back the students and keep the Cal Berkeley Libertarians enthusiastic and active. For more information on the student libertarian group, contact George Lee at (510) 664-2237 or check their website at <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~callib>.

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