

The INDIVIDUALIST

February, 1978 VOL. I; No. 3

A VOICE OF REASON IN THE STATIST WILDERNESS

FROM THE (acting) CHAIR

DISCUSSION SESSIONS COULD BE ENJOYABLE AND PRODUCTIVE

In its last meeting, the LPRI Executive Committee took a step toward libertarian activism that could be of great significance not only to the local libertarian party, but to all persons living in this area who are at all concerned with the problem created by the ever-increasing State encroachment into our personal lives and into the economy of the area. The Execom has made plans to sponsor a series of discussion/social sessions at which area libertarians can gather in an informal atmosphere to get acquainted with each other, and to discuss many of the problems facing us, along with libertarian solutions to these problems.

The get-togethers will specifically not be political in nature; i. e., they are not designed to conduct LP business, or even to discuss Libertarian politics. They are designed to foster discussion and conversation about broad general issues and libertarian theory. The meetings will not be limited to party members and activists, but are, on the contrary, intended to appeal to, and attract, as wide an assortment of libertarian/objectivist oriented people as possible. The intent is to give people an opportunity to kick ideas around, to listen to what other rational individuals have to say, to refine their own thinking, to achieve a blend or fusion of ideas, or, to let the sound ideas surface and the fallacy of the un-sound ideas become manifest. In general, we hope the sessions will provide an opportunity for intellectual stimulation and some theoretical brainstorming.

A second feature of these gatherings is the chance for socializing among members of the local libertarian

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AREA LIBERTARIANS MEET

The LPRI held the first of a planned series of discussion sessions last January 5th, at Brown University's Olney Lounge. The event attracted about 15 area residents, most, but not all, of them libertarians.

Host Todd Becker started the program off on the subject, "How does a libertarian live in a statist society?", but it wasn't long before the assemblage had broken up into smaller groups for some spirited discussion of more specific topics. Above the tinkle of wine glasses and the crackle of cheese-dipped potato chips and Triscuits could be heard the red-flag phrases typical of libertarian get-togethers: "abortion/pro-life, compulsory service, decriminalization, property rights, individualism, free market economics." These were only some of the subjects thrashed out, ideas swapped, and one-on-one debates engaged in during the three hours plus that the session lasted. Whether any burning issues were put to rest is debatable, but it was just about the universal consensus of all those present that another meeting should be held sometime in February. With this, the remnants of the beer, wine, cheese dip, and crackers were cleaned up and the session adjourned.

EXECOM ACCEPTS ENGEL RESIGNATION

The chief order of business at the December meeting of the LPRI Executive Committee was the vote to accept the resignation submitted by Stewart Engel, party chairman. The resignation was accepted reluctantly, but, since Engel will be absent from the state for an indeterminate time, no other course of action was considered feasible. The Execom decided to postpone selection of a new chair-

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ENGEL RESIGNS AS CHAIRMAN

Stewart Engel, LPRI Chairman, has officially resigned from the post to which he had been elected at the party organizing conference last March.

In a letter addressed to members of the R. I. party's executive committee, Engel submitted his resignation, to be effective immediately. (Although the reason for Engel's action was not stated in the letter, it had already been known that he would be absent from Rhode Island for a considerable length of time, and would not be able to continue in the role of chairman.)

The Executive Committee reluctantly accepted Engel's resignation, but decided not to act at once to fill the vacancy in the chairmanship.

Until such time as a new chairman is elected, the party vice-chairman, Tony Fiocca, will perform the duties of the chairman, in accordance with the terms of the party constitution.

GAB-FEST SLATED FOR FEB. 27th

The second in a series of social/discussion sessions will be held Monday, February 27th, commencing at about 8:00 P. M. at the Olney Lounge on the Brown University campus.

The get-together will be hosted by Elizabeth Behrman of Brown University. The general subject will be economics - theories, policies, the general situation, money, taxation, you name it.

The LPRI Executive Committee, sponsor of these events, invites all area libertarians receiving this notice to attend, and, by all means, to bring along any friend or acquaintance who might be interested in getting in

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EDITORIAL CORNER

A POLITICAL STORM

While the snow that blanketed R.I. last Feb. 7th may have fallen from the heavens, it brought with it some very earthly political ramifications.

First, we are entitled to ask whether state and city officials did everything possible to begin immediate clean-up operations; or did they drag their feet, waiting for a "disaster area" declaration so that the bulk of the costs of the snow removal would then be taken up by the federal government? (Let Uncle Sam do it, with his money.) It would be interesting if the local electronic and journalistic media with their penchant for "investigative reporting" would look into this one. (They won't, of course; some of the local media types seemed to be glorifying in this crisis as much as the politicians obviously were.)

Of even more concern are the emergency measures imposed in the aftermath of the storm. If we need any reminder as to just how close this country is to totalitarian dictatorship, then this storm provides it. The army comes in, with an aura of martial law present that gave any libertarian the shivers; mayors turn their domains into virtual "closed cities" by arbitrarily declaring driving and walking bans; the governor imposes, by edict, price controls, slapping stiff fines on anyone raising food prices above the pre-storm level. (We wonder if our Glorious Leader stopped to consider the increased costs of doing business in the conditions that prevailed.) These and other actions of the political powers serve to remind us that it can happen here, and that it won't take much to bring it about. Remember, this was just a snow storm.

Finally, during this crisis we had a chance to see our political leaders in their true colors. First, with their ridiculous TV posturing as "Heroes of the Storm"; and then, as things were winding down, with their petty bickering, blame-placing, and charge and counter-charge between political rivals. (You can bet there will be much more of this to come, until long after the snow has melted away.) It seems that the kind of thing we have just gone through can bring out the best in people - and the worst in politicians.

When it's all over with, it may turn out that the worst part of the Blizzard of '78 was the snow-job heaped upon this state by its political leaders.

AAF

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LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF RHODE ISLAND, Box 657, Bristol, R.I. 02809

Name _____

Mailing address _____

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I wish to join LPRI. Regular member (\$10.00) Student (\$5.00) _____

I wish to subscribe to the newsletter. \$5.00 enclosed. (Free to members)

I am enclosing a contribution of _____

I cannot at this time contribute financially but want to work for the LPRI.

I have not made up my mind. Keep me on the mailing list a while longer.

Membership applicants only, please sign: "I endorse to statement of principles of the Libertarian Party. I do not believe in the initiation of force as a means of achieving political or social goals."

Signed _____

PLAGIARISMS - Items of interest
stolen from other libertarian
and secular journals.

□ A recent issue of the SIL newsletter had some interesting quotations from the writings of Albert Jay Nock - specifically on the subject of money. In his "Memoirs of a Superfluous Man", Nock comments: "People have been thinking in terms of money, not in terms of commodities... such thinking is sheer insanity." Nock illustrates with a reference to his experience in Germany in 1923. "I crossed from Amsterdam to Berlin with German money amounting to nearly \$1,250,000 pre-war value... (the only time I was ever a millionaire)... but, my best hope was that it might cover a decent dinner and a night's lodgings. A glance at this state of things would show... that money is worth only what it will buy, and it will not buy anything if it is not worth anything." Further on, "Money does not pay for anything, never has, never will... goods and services can be paid for only with goods and services... Everything which is paid for must be paid for out of production, for there is no other source of payment. Another strange notion is that the State has money of its own; the State has no money, it produces nothing. It's existence is purely parasitic, maintained by taxation. 'Government money' of which one hears so much nowadays, does not exist; there is no such thing."

Then, on Social Security (this written in 1943, mind you): "In various schemes of pensionism, of insurance against sickness, accident, unemployment, and what not, one notices that the government is supposed to pay so much into the fund, the employer so much, and the workman so much... But, the government pays nothing... what such schemes actually come to is that the workman pays his own share outright; he pays the employer's share in the enhanced price of commodities; and he pays the government's share in taxation. He pays the whole bill (plus the swollen costs of bureaucratic brokerage) ... one sees that what the workman gets out of this arrangement is about

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the most expensive form of insurance that could be devised..."

It would seem that the last four decades have only accented the wisdom of Mr. Nock, and that his comments are even truer to day than when they were written.

□ Bill Birmingham, in the December, '77 issue of Reason magazine, comments on the activities of an Indian tribe in Tacoma, Wash.: "Some Indians have been buying parcels of land... designating them reservations, and opening liquor stores on them. Invoking the Indian tribe's sovereignty, they ignore state taxes and sell firewater to the palefaces at cut-rate prices. The stores also sell tax-free cigarettes and illegal fire-crackers... Who said the Noble Red Man was a myth?"

Right you are, Bill. Maybe we should give the country back to the Indians after all; might do a better job of running it than the Great White Father.

□ We cannot resist quoting just one word from "Sarcastic Steve" Trinward's column in Massachusetts Liberty (the LPM newsletter). It seems there's been a running feud lately between the liberal, do-gooder types in the Massachusetts press and the more conservative journalists from New Hampshire. (The battle is over the contention that New Hampshire doesn't do enough for its citizens in the way of tax-supported public services - which seems to disturb certain journalists from Taxachusetts.) The word which the Granite Staters have chosen to describe their big-spender neighbors to the south is "Massholes".

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(Gab-Fest - From Page 1)

on the talk and socializing. (Even if it means lending an air of controversy to the proceedings.)

While there is no admission charge for these meetings, a small voluntary donation (of about \$1.00) will help considerably in meeting the costs of the beer, wine, and other refreshments provided.

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man and will go along with the vice chairman continuing to perform the duties of the chairman.

In another very significant action, the committee made plans for a series of discussion/social meetings to be held about once a month in various locations throughout the state. The purpose of these sessions is to give area libertarians and other interested persons a chance to meet and get to know each other in an informal, cordial atmosphere, and to exchange ideas and theories on the various social, political, and economic problems confronting us as individuals, and as a community.

The Execom also voted to order a quantity of the new tabloid, "Outlook," published by LP National - primarily for the purpose of distributing copies at local educational institutions as part of the general recruiting effort to be undertaken this year. Copies of Outlook will also be available to any other local libertarians who may want to pass them out to their own friends and acquaintances.

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community. How often have you had the feeling that you were the only person alive who was rational, that the rest of the world was totally looney, and that there was not another soul in existence who shared your reasonable ideas? Well, here's a chance to meet other people, right here in Outer Slobbovia R.I., who actually agree with your concept of what's right and wrong with politics, the economy, and society in general. Besides the psychological boost and intellectual stimulus from getting to meet these like-minded people, you might also make some valuable friendships out of these get-togethers.

And, finally, while the discussion sessions themselves will not deal with party politics, we naturally can hope that some of those attending will develop an interest in the LPRI itself, and perhaps become actively involved in the party's activities.

At any rate, we certainly hope to see a large turnout at our next session (Feb. 27th), and hope that all in attendance will find it well worth while and enjoyable.

AAF

FROM THE FLOOR (We encourage comments and articles from readers.)

ANARCHY vs. MINARCHY
REVISITED

Jeff Friedman

One of the most venerable and confusing disputes between libertarians revolves around the issue of anarchy vs. minarchy (limited government). It is a somewhat unique subject in that it inspires not the usual clear libertarian analysis, but confused debate which leaves observers at a loss. It is nearly impossible to delineate areas of genuine clash in this debate, and it is even more difficult to follow a line of ideological conflict to a rational conclusion.

The confusion stems from a misconception of "government". Traditionally, government, exclusively, is thought of as the officially constituted user of force (be it state, local, or federal government). Yet, there is nothing (except their pretense of morality) that distinguishes "governments" from those who perform the same coercive acts but do not choose to call themselves by that name. For instance, there is no moral difference between a tax collector and a thief, but the linguistic distinction blinds even libertarians to their similarity. Libertarians should know better than to fall into the trap of viewing the actions of governments as different from those of people commonly referred to as "bandits" and "murderers". Nevertheless, the cause of the anarchy/minarchy debate is precisely such a conceptual error.

A definition of "government" should be broad enough to include both official (e.g., U.S., R.I.) and unofficial (e.g., Mafia, common criminal) violence. One such definition would be, "User of force." By this definition, a libertarian world would be one in which no governments-i.e., nobody-initiated force. In light of this concept, the roots of many other difficult libertarian issues become immediately apparent. The perplexity over how issues such as punishment and national defense

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would be dealt with in a libertarian society is due to the fact that these problems would not really arise in a totally libertarian society. The very existence of domestic and foreign criminals which necessitates punishment and national defense presupposes the existence of un-libertarian governments, which would be a definitionally un-libertarian situation. In the world advocated by libertarians, not only would the official American governments be libertarian; so would all governments (all users of force.) By definition, then, there would be no criminals, foreign or domestic; their existence is a function of the degree to which libertarianism is not universally accepted.

To challenge libertarianism by raising these issues, then, is as nonsensical as it would be to argue that socialism is wrong because some people would disobey socialist measures. More to the point, it is as if libertarianism were discredited because some people in a libertarian society would coerce others. In both cases the criticisms are inconsistent with the political philosophies being criticized. Whether a political system would last is a matter of political science; whether it should last is the question answered by political philosophy. And, in the realm of philosophy, it is necessary to hypothesize the existence of worlds in which po-

litical philosophies are universally applied (or enforced).

In applying this analysis to the anarchist/minarchist debate, the crucial fact is that all of the participants are libertarians. Thus, as Roy Childs has pointed out, a libertarian minarchist cannot advocate laws which prohibit the existence of competing agencies of justice, for the enforcement of such laws would entail the initiation of force against parties innocent of any crime; it would make those governments which impose such laws un-libertarian (by definition). With this point made, it becomes apparent that both libertarian anarchists and libertarian minarchists advocate the same thing; libertarianism. They may differ on whether competitive or monopolistic libertarian governments would predominate, but they cannot support measures to cause such a predominance while remaining libertarians.

So, there is no philosophical disagreement between "anarchists" and "minarchists". The apparent differences of opinion are the result of arguments made by those who have jumped into an imaginary fray, based on the erroneous distinction between official and unofficial governments. For example, minarchists argue that without a supreme government defense agencies might abuse their power - an argument that ignores the fact that defense agencies would be

governments, so the supremacy of one of them would be just as likely under minarchy. Furthermore, were the agencies to abuse their power, they would no longer be libertarian! The minarchists' argument is as unfair to anarchists as is the dictatorship "problem" to libertarians in general. (They are, in fact, the same argument.)

Exactly the same criticism should be levelled at anarchists' arguments. One of these is that governments exhibit a tendency to violate rights. But were this to hold true for minarchist governments, it would also for anarchist governments (defense agencies). More importantly, it could not hold true, for then the governments would be un-libertarian, not advocated by libertarians.

In short, since libertarians oppose all who initiate force, the question of whether libertarian governments would tend to be territorially monopolistic (conforming to the traditional image of "government") or competitive (i.e., anarchocapitalistic) is moot; what is relevant is that they would have to be libertarian. In our zeal to dismantle the most immediate threat to our liberty, the official governments, we must not lose sight of the equal evil of other un-libertarian governments. Our purpose is universal libertarianism; when we forget that fact, we re-open a futile debate about non-issues.

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