Libertarians attend 3rd-party conference

Several Libertarian Party members attended a “Third Parties ’96” conference held in early June at George Washington University in Washington, DC, with the goal of building bridges with American liberals.

Virginia LP State Chair Rick Sincere and Maryland State Chair Jesse Markowitz were featured speakers at the “National Conference for Political Activists,” which drew almost exclusively from the far left wing of American politics, including representatives from the Democratic Socialists of America, the Green Party, and the New Party.

“It was clear from my brief participation that Libertarians need to work harder at finding the rhetoric that appeals to the Left,” said Sincere, who participated in a panel discussion entitled Building New Coalitions. “Too much of our literature and training is based on appealing to disaffected Republicans.”

Does any new socialist coalition pose a danger to the LP’s future success? Not immediately, said Sincere: “One heartening aspect was that it appears that these people are miles behind us in organizing.”

Pennsylvania Libertarians help defeat graffiti law

Pennsylvania Libertarians chalked up a victory in May by helping to defeat an anti-graffiti ordinance in the town of Abington “that directly violated the rights of the property owner.”

LP activists Ken Krawchuk, Bob Kern, and Brian McHugh testified at a Township Commissioner’s hearing against the ordinance, which would have required victims of vandalism to remove graffiti at their own expense within 15 days — or face a $300 fine.

“McHugh presented a novel alternative to the heavy-handed ordinance — punish the criminal instead of the victim,” reported the Liberty Penn newsletter. Following the Libertarian testimony, the offensive language from the ordinance was voted down unanimously.

“Libertarians have directly tilted local public policy in the direction of liberty, proving, once again, that you can fight City Hall . . . and win,” noted Liberty Penn. “The image presented was one of the Libertarian Party as a champion of the victim against an overbearing government.”

Media Notes

- LP Director of Communications Bill Winter appeared on C-SPAN on June 4th as a speaker at the annual “Committee of 1776” gun rights rally in Washington, DC.

  In his speech, Winter noted that the Libertarian Party is the only “political party that supports your right to keep and bear arms one hundred percent!” He told the enthusiastic crowd, “[I hope] that if you ever get tired of the unending attacks on the Second Amendment by the Democratic Party — and the endless string of broken promises by the Republican Party — you’ll consider voting for Libertarian candidates next time you step into the ballot box.”

- The Libertarian Party earned more national publicity this month, with appearances in New York magazine and The Hill newspaper.

  The generally positive article in the June 17 issue of The Hill — an influential Capitol Hill newspaper — noted: “American voters may not realize it, but much of the recent hostility toward big government is not necessarily Republican or conservative — it’s also Libertarian.” Quoted in the piece were Moreno Valley Mayor Bonnie Flickinger, Ross City Council member Peter Barry, and Bill Winter.

  The June 12 issue of New York magazine featured an article entitled “The Rad Right.” Written with a liberal sneer, it focused on the rise of the libertarian movement, including the Cato Institute and “libertarian” GOP Congressmen. The LP was casually disparaged for its “wacky consistency,” and Republicans condemned for their hypocrisy: “Republicans like the free-economy part. It’s the other stuff [social tolerance] that makes them queasy.”

- The Libertarian Party is the subject of a chapter in a new book, Politics At the Margin: Historical Studies of Public Expression Outside the Mainstream, by Susan Herbst.

  The book, published by Cambridge University Press, examines groups who have been “excluded from conventional public discourse and activity.”

  Herbst takes an objective, almost anthropological, view of Libertarians — for example, entitling one section “Rituals Among Libertarians” — but shows a grudging admiration for the dedication of LP activists. She notes, “In these days of political cynicism and alienation, Libertarians are truly an anomaly: They keep up the struggle despite some serious electoral and ‘public relations’ setbacks. Libertarians believe in the free market and the protection of civil liberties with an intensity and consistency we rarely see in American politics today.”
High school students enter cyberpolitics

By Mary Wade Burnside
STAFF WRITER

Andrew Atwood scans a computer bulletin board he helped set up and finds a message someone sent to him about the Libertarian Party:

"The Democrats are the party that wants to give money away, welfare, food stamps, and every other kind of program imaginable. So we know where they are coming from. The Republicans' claim to fame is that they aren't Democrats. They are not a party of principle. The Libertarian Party is. The end of the two-party system is near. Am I preaching to the choir?"

Along with his friend and fellow George Washington High School senior, Matthew Fischer, Atwood set up a computer bulletin board two summers ago. Then, when the pair became interested in the Libertarian Party last winter, they expanded their bulletin board. Now it offers information on a party considered to be a refuge for constituents who believe governments should govern less in all aspects — economically and personally.

"There were aspects of both parties that were appealing," Atwood said. "Neither of the major parties were 100 percent of what I felt."

A young male thing?

So far, respondents from as far away as Colorado have expressed interest in the Libertarian messages offered by the bulletin board. John K. Brown, the chairman of the state's Libertarian Party, said from 300 to 500 computer aficionados have responded.

Fischer and Atwood are not the only young adults whose interest in computers and the Libertarian Party met in a useful way. A number of computer users, many of them young college-age males, have been discovering the Libertarian Party while cruising the Internet, according to an article in the April 6 issue of Rolling Stone.

The trend has not gone unnoticed by Atwood and Fischer, both of whom have used computers since grade school. "A lot of people who use the Internet have similar philosophies, we're finding," Fischer said.

Those philosophies include Libertarian Party beliefs in favor of abortion rights, free speech and a free-market economy; and against censorship and welfare. Typically, Libertarians also support the legalization of drugs and a reduced military as a major positive.

Brown said the bulletin board is to promote free speech and a free-market economy; and against censorship and welfare. Typically, Libertarians also support the legalization of drugs and a reduced military as a major positive.

Matt Fischer (left) and Andrew Atwood combined their love of computers and admiration for the Libertarian Party when they designated part of their own bulletin board to party talk.

The two initially bought the software, obtained a dedicated phone line, and named the bulletin board the Abode of Evil, which has now been shortened to AoE in an effort to sound a bit more mature.

"You have to get your own phone," Fischer said. "You can't use your mom's phone. Otherwise, people would call your house at 4 in the morning."

As Fischer and Atwood prepare to graduate from high school and go off to college (Fischer to Missouri and Atwood to Virginia), they know they can keep up the bulletin board from anywhere they go.

In the meantime, they have taken up the latest Libertarian cause, fighting against the Communications Decency Act, which addresses what a computer user can and cannot say in an e-mail message.

"The main purpose of the bulletin board is to promote free speech," Atwood said. "General freedom of expression is the main reason we set out doing this."
The Libertarian Party has issued a grade of B on the Republican's Contract With America. The Libertarian Party graded 10 major components of the contract.

"Our grading criteria were simple: Did the elements of the contract reduce the size, cost and intrusiveness of government? Did it increase the personal and economic freedom of American citizens," asks Steve Dasbach, chair of the Libertarian Party, the country's third largest political party. "Overall, the Republicans had a chance to make history, to launch a real revolution, and to live up to their libertarian campaign rhetoric. Unfortunately, they fell somewhat short of that goal," says Dasbach.

On the issue of welfare reform, the Republicans scored a D. Dasbach says, "Another missed opportunity for real reform. It's more talk than action, and simply shifts wasteful welfare programs from the federal level to the state level." On the federal budget, the Libertarians gave the Republicans an A. On term limits, the Libertarian Party graded the Republicans a D.

The Libertarian Party believes in "government should be reduced to its primary role; to protect the rights of citizens." The party is committed to "first principle liberty," which means that "the government's primary role is to protect the rights of citizens," said national chairman. "The Libertarian Party believes that government is a threat to liberty."

The Libertarian Party has issued a grade of B- on the Republican's Contract With America a year on the Libertarian ticket, before making an unsuccessful, nonpartisan bid this spring for the Palatine Village Board.

Another local connection with the party is Palatine resident Michael Ginsberg, who ran for state convention chairman last year on the Libertarian ticket, before making an unsuccessful, nonpartisan bid this spring for the Palatine Village Board.
Partying In D.C.

Forget Chicago and San Diego. It seems the District will host a presidential nominating convention in July 1996. But there won’t be elephant or donkey emblems plastered about the city, no Democratic or Republican slogans filling the air. It’s the Libertarian Party that’s coming to town.

On Monday, the D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics approved the party’s application to name its affiliate here the Libertarian Party of the District of Columbia, two weeks after the Maryland affiliate applied to become the third legally recognized party in that state.

Because of growth in the party nationwide — paid membership has jumped 25 percent this year in Maryland and Virginia — Libertarians are moving their national convention to the election year in 1996, the same year as the two major parties, said Gene A. Cisewski, the party’s D.C. chairman.

"Because of our growth, we’re taking the historical step of operating similar to the two big parties that now control government," Mr. Cisewski said.

SPONDEE!

The Libertarians may be championing the only principled vein of thought — deeply rooted in the Constitution — that could serve as a bridge for people of all colors and religions in readdressing our grievances, upholding American principles and, above all, making the state accountable to all of us.

The current right vs. left dogmatic war will only lead to even more unbearable living conditions and racial-class strife.

JOSH GREWSTER
Chicago

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE well-written article on libertarianism by Francis Wilkinson ("Sidewalks for Sale," RSL70). It is a relief to know the mainstream is finally learning about an ideology that embraces the best aspects of liberalism and conservatism.

TODD ADAMS
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SIDEWALKS FOR SALE

Made several snide comments about libertarians looking to “dead white males” or the just “dead and white.” There is, however, quite a diversity among libertarians. African-American Richard Boddie and Native American activist Russell Means have sought the Libertarian Party’s presidential nomination. And the 1972 Libertarian vice-presidential candidate, Tonic Nathan, became the first woman in U.S. history to receive an electoral vote. Libertarians have been years ahead in practicing inclusive politics.

DENNIS KJELDERGAARD
St. Cloud, Minn.

American principles and, above all, making the state accountable to all of us. The current right vs. left dogmatic war will only lead to even more unbearable living conditions and racial-class strife.

JOSH FRIEDWART
Chicago