

Temporary Platform of the LIBERTARIAN PARTY

THE PARTY OF PRINCIPLE



The following material was prepared by members of the Libertarian Party's precursor, the Committee to Organize a Libertarian Party. Their purpose was to provide a working document for Libertarian Party members to use in answering questions and recruiting other members during the first few months of the Party's existence. A national convention, open to all Party Members, will be held in June, 1972; at that time, the official platform for the next two-year period will be adopted. It is not anticipated that the official platform will differ substantially from the following document.

PREAMBLE

We, the supporters of the Libertarian Party, rise to challenge the myth of the omnipotent state, to defend the freedom and dignity of man.

The citizen who is subservient to the state is either a ward or a slave—a ward if he receives from the state that which he did not freely earn, a slave if his life and property are placed at the disposal of the state. The free man can be neither ward nor slave. The free man renounces the initiation of force to attain his ends; he thus will not sanction the initiation of force by any agent—the state included—to attain those ends for him. The free man regards his life and property as inviolably his alone; he thus refuses to allow himself or his property to be a "national resource" to be manipulated for the "public good," or involuntary fodder for war.

The free man recognizes as his moral right the freedom to think, speak, and act as he and he alone chooses, so long as he does not infringe voluntary relations among others. The free man disclaims any "right," and refuses to recognize any claim to a "right" by others, which requires for its implementation or enforcement the destruction of voluntary relations.

Our goal is nothing less than to create a society in which the free man can flourish.

There is only one system of government consistent with such a society: that system whereby government is commissioned by its citizens to protect liberty and, at the same time, prohibited by its citizens from infringing liberty. The free man declares with John Locke: "... however it may be mistaken, the end of law is, not to abolish or restrain, but to preserve and enlarge freedom."

The enumeration of positions herein should not be taken to disparage other positions which free men may share.

CIVIL LIBERTY AND CIVIL ORDER

The maintenance of civil order with full respect for civil liberties is the first obligation of a proper government. There is no conflict between civil order and civil liberty in a free society. Both concepts are based upon the same fundamental principle: that no person, no group, and no government may start the use of force against any other person, group, or government. Government is *instituted* to protect individual rights and voluntary relations. Government is constitutionally *limited* to prevent the infringement of individual rights and voluntary relations by the government itself.

1. **Crime in a Free Society.** We hold that no action which does not infringe the individual rights or voluntary relations of others can properly be termed a crime. We favor the repeal of all "crimes without victims" now incorporated in federal and state laws.

2. **Order.** We support even-handed and consistent enforcement of laws designed to protect individual rights—regardless of the cause, evil or benevolent, for which these laws may be violated.

3. **Due Process for Criminally Accused.** Until such time as a person is proved guilty of a crime, that person should be accorded all possible respect for his individual rights. We are thus opposed to reduction of present safeguards for the rights of the criminally accused. Specifically, we are opposed to preventive detention, so-called "no-knock laws" and all other similar measures which threaten existing rights. We further pledge to do all possible to give life to the Sixth Amendment's guarantee of a speedy trial, and shall work for appropriate legislation to this end.

4. **Freedom of Speech and The Press.** We pledge to oppose all forms of censorship, whatever the medium involved. Recent events have demonstrated that the already precarious First Amendment rights of the broadcasting industry are becoming still more precarious. Regulation of broadcasting can no longer be tolerated. We shall support legislation to repeal the Federal

Communications Act, and to provide for private ownership of broadcasting rights, thus giving broadcasting First Amendment parity with other communications media.

5. Equal Protection under the Law. We support the constitutional provisions and civil rights legislation for racial minorities and women which guarantee and promote equal protection under the law. We shall oppose legislation attempting to regulate purely private, non-coercive activity.

6. Protection of Privacy. Encroachments on privacy by government should be eliminated so far as it is possible to do so. Electronic and other covert government surveillance of citizens should be restricted to activity which can be shown beforehand, under high standards of probable cause, to be criminal and to present immediate and grave danger to other citizens. The national census and other government compilations of data on citizens should be conducted on a strictly voluntary basis.

7. The Right to Keep and Bear Arms. In recognition of the fact that the individual is his own last source of self-defense, the authors of the Constitution guaranteed the right of the people to keep and bear arms in the Second Amendment. This reasoning remains valid today. We pledge to uphold that guarantee.

8. Volunteer Army. The causistry and sophistry of the Supreme Court notwithstanding, conscription for military service is involuntary servitude—and thus the most repugnant of concepts in a free society. We support immediate abolition of the draft. We further pledge to work for a declaration of amnesty for all who have been convicted of, or who now stand accused of, draft evasion.

9. Property Rights. We hold that property rights are personal rights and, as such, are entitled to the same respect and protection as all other personal rights. We further hold that the owner of property has the full right to control, use, dispose of, or in any other manner enjoy his property without interference, until and unless the exercise of his control infringes the valid rights of others. We shall thus oppose restrictions upon the use of property which do not have as their sole end the protection of valid rights.

TRADE AND THE ECONOMY

The proper role of government in the area of economics is no different from its role in any other area of human action: to protect and foster individual rights and voluntary relations. Thus government must define and enforce property rights, adjudicate disputes and enforce contracts, and provide a legal framework in which voluntary trade is nourished. All efforts by government to redistribute wealth, or otherwise control and manage trade between citizens for any other end than to protect and foster voluntary relations, are improper in a free society.

1. **Subsidies.** We are opposed to governmental subsidies, direct or indirect, to business, labor, or agriculture.
2. **Tariffs and Quotas.** Like subsidies, tariffs and quotas serve only to give special treatment to favored interests and to diminish the welfare of the citizens at large. Where unfair and artificially disparate price differentials between foreign and domestic goods exist, the correct remedy is a readjustment of currency exchange rates to their true, economic relationship. Where price differentials are not artificial, government cannot properly interfere.
3. **Private Ownership of Gold.** Current restrictions on private ownership of gold and regulation of its price are not only an unwarranted hindrance to a sane and healthy currency system but are a serious infringement of individual rights as well. We support private ownership and free-market pricing of gold.
4. **Public Lands.** We support increased homesteading and mining claims on public lands, and will seek to develop new programs based on the homesteading principle. We further support recognition and enforcement of treaties with American Indians wherein the United States has contracted to return federal lands to the Indians after such lands are no longer in use by the federal government.
5. **Taxation of Single Persons.** Present federal income tax laws invidiously discriminate against single persons. We shall support tax-reform to end this discrimination.

6. **The Economy.** Continued mismanagement and interference by government in the economy has imperiled both the material prosperity and personal freedom of every American. We support the following specific reforms: an immediate reduction of both taxes and government spending; the immediate halt to inflationary monetary policies, together with wholesale reform, and the eventual elimination, of the Federal Reserve System; and the removal, with all deliberate speed, of governmental impediments to market forces—including the repeal of the National Labor Relations Act and the Interstate Commerce Act, as the most pressing and critical impediments.

DOMESTIC ILLS

Some current domestic ills, such as crime, pollution, and consumer protection, contain issues of individual rights and voluntary relations—and are thus proper issues for government. Other such ills, such as over-population, medical care, decaying cities, and poverty, do not contain issues of individual rights and are thus not proper issues for government as such. For these issues, we shall support a reduction of government's present role, and, eventually, a total withdrawal of governmental intervention. We shall support the establishment of a legal framework in which private, voluntary solutions to these problems can be developed and implemented.

1. **Pollution.** We support effective and judicious anti-pollution laws. Such laws must, however, take proper recognition of other values necessary to a free and civilized society, and, in light of those values, set forth objective standards for determining what are reasonable and unreasonable emissions in particular cases. Further, in recognition that much of our pollution problem has arisen because air and water are treated as "free" commodities, we shall work for the establishment of pricing mechanisms based on property rights in the air and water—thus providing economic sanctions against pollution. We shall strenuously oppose all attempts to transform anti-pollution efforts into a general movement against technology, or the use of anti-pollution efforts to destroy personal freedom.

2. **Consumer Protection.** We shall support strong and effective laws against fraud and misrepresentation. We shall oppose, however, that present and prospective consumer protection legislation which infringes upon voluntary trade. We shall encourage the continued development of private consumer reporting and testing agencies, as the most effective deterrent to fraud.

3. **Over-population.** We support an end to all subsidies for childbearing built into our present laws, such as deductions for dependents in the federal income tax, and incremental allowances under the Family Assistance Plan.

FOREIGN POLICY

The principles which guide a legitimate government in its relationships with other governments are the same as those which guide relationships among individuals and relationships between individuals and governments. It must protect itself and its citizens against the initiation of force from other nations. It must foster voluntary trade. And it must base its judgements of legitimacy of foreign governments on the same standards by which its own legitimacy is judged—i.e., do they protect rather than infringe the liberties of their citizens?

ECONOMIC

1. **Foreign Aid.** It should now be clear that economic aid to foreign countries does not advance our national interests, and, indeed, serves only to remove funds from individuals who can use them much more effectively. We support an end to all foreign aid.

2. **Investment in Foreign Countries.** We shall neither oppose nor support private investment in foreign countries. Those who do invest must do so at their own risk.

3. **Ownership in Unclaimed Property.** We pledge to oppose recognition of claims by fiat, by nations or international bodies, of presently unclaimed property, such as the ocean floor and planetary bodies. We shall develop objective standards for recognizing claims of ownership in such property.

4. **Currency Exchange Rates.** We pledge to oppose all governmental attempts to peg or regulate currency exchange rates. International trade can truly be free only when currency exchange rates reflect the true economic value of respective currencies. This in turn can only be accomplished in a free currency market.

MILITARY

1. **Military Alliances.** The United States should abandon its attempts to act as policeman for the world, and should enter into alliances only with countries whose continued free existence is vital to our legitimate national interests. These countries should include: Japan, Australia, Canada, and the free countries of Western Europe. We should in particular disengage from any present alliances which include despotic governments, whether of the left or the right. We shall support an alliance under which the United States offers the protection of its nuclear umbrella, but in which our allies provide their own conventional defense capability.

2. **Military Capability.** We shall support the maintenance of a sufficient military establishment to defend the United States and its allies against aggression. We should have a sufficient nuclear capacity to convince any potential aggressor that it cannot hope to survive a first strike against the United States. But, as our foreign commitments are reduced, and as our allies assume their share of the burden of providing a conventional war capability, we should be able to reduce the size of our conventional defense, and thus reduce the overall cost and size of our total defense establishment.

3. **The Military-Industrial Complex.** The concentration of power inherent in the maintenance of a large defense establishment presents a real danger to a free society. We pledge to work for legislation designed to provide effective checks against this power.

4. **Private Action.** A doctrine of official non-interference by the United States in many areas of the world should not be construed to prevent private action on behalf of a foreign nation or foreign people. We shall support removal of sanctions against private contributions, whether financial or military, to foreign nations or foreign people where such contributions do not interfere with our legitimate national interests.

5. **Commitment of troops.** We shall support an Amendment to the Constitution permitting the Senate to veto or prohibit the commitment of troops to battle by the President.

6. **The Indo-China War.** We support the immediate and total withdrawal of all American troops from Indo-China.

DIPLOMATIC

1. **Diplomatic Recognition.** The United States should establish a scheme of recognition consistent with the principles of a free society. One such principle is that, while individuals everywhere in the world have unalienable rights, governments which enslave individuals have no rights whatsoever. We thus support the following scheme of recognition. Those governments which satisfy three criteria: (1) free and open elections; (2) unrestricted emigration; (3) sufficient freedom of the press to allow for peaceful change, should be accorded *full de jure recognition*. Those governments which do not satisfy one or more of the three criteria, but with whom the United States has a practical necessity to enter into agreements, should be accorded *limited de jure recognition only*. That is, we shall recognize the contractual rights of the government arising from the particular contract, but we shall recognize no other rights. All other governments should be accorded *de facto* recognition only.

Such a scheme of recognition, however, should not be construed to prohibit private relations between American citizens and any foreign citizens. Indeed, they should be encouraged, and we support elimination of present sanctions against them. Nor should it be construed to restrict the opening and maintenance of channels of communication between the United States government and totalitarian governments where such channels are desirable for national security or otherwise serve legitimate national interests.

2. **Secession.** We shall support recognition of the right to secede. Political units or areas which do secede should be recognized by the United States as independent political entities where: (1) secession is supported by a majority within the political unit, and (2) the new political entity meets the three criteria for full de jure recognition set forth above.

3. **The United Nations.** We support the withdrawal of the United States from the United Nations.

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If you are in substantial agreement with this platform, and would like to help ensure that the philosophy presented therein is represented in future elections, you can do so by joining the Libertarian Party as a working member. Annual dues are \$6 (\$4 for students), and include a subscription to the Party's monthly newsletter (\$3 to non-members).

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Additional copies of this platform may be ordered at the following prices: four copies, \$1; 10/\$2; 25/\$4; 50/\$7; 100/\$12.