

Open LETTER

May 1994

Preserving The Right to be Wrong

To Active Transformation and the National Womens Rights Organization:

I know that the Ku Klux Klan always bring out a lot of emotion, but the groups opposing them must be very careful not to become as intolerant as the Klan themselves are. The underlying issue here is exactly when a person or a group of people can rightfully be restrained or contained by others.

People can really only be judged by the things they DO, the actions they carry out, the interactions they have with others. The limiting of, harming of, infringing on, or interfering with another persons life, liberty, or rightfully acquired property is a violation of that persons rights. Any individual who makes such an interference must be stopped, by the person who is being infringed upon, or by collective force if need be. Any person who does not violate another's unalienable rights need not be restrained in any way, and this is regardless of whether that person is white or black, male or female, Christian or Jewish; and regardless of any opinions they hold and express, so long as those expressions are made in a peaceful way.

The KKK is reprehensible because they discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, and sexual orientation; none of which can truly be used as measures of the content of a persons character. Their intolerance is unquestionably wrong, but only as wrong as the statements made by anti-Klan groups that the KKK should not be allowed to recruit, or that they must be stopped from organizing. The United States Constitution is very clear and very correct in guaranteeing rights to freedom

of speech and freedom to peaceably assemble. An idea, even a stupid idea based on unsubstantiated bias, is nothing more than a thought, and a thought never hurt anybody. Because there is no harm in an idea, such expressions can not rightfully be restricted. The KKK is obviously wrong in their theories of minority inferiority, but they have the right to be wrong. And as wrong as they are for forming opinions based on color or prayer, groups against the Klan are equally incorrect for forming their opinions based on the KKK's words or thoughts instead of their actions.

But the Klan is up to more than just words and marches, you say? Well, that is the more important issue, but a separate one. In the past, KKK members have been known to interfere with the lives, liberties, or property of others. These actions are illegal, and certainly must be prevented when possible, and rectified when not prevented. If the Klan assembly at the Capitol includes lynching a black man, that portion of it must be stopped. If they do finally march in Charlotte, and try to burn a cross on the private property of a non-participating city resident, that part of it must be prevented. Such physical actions are harmful,

"The KKK has the right to remain stupid. Nothing they SAY can be used against them."

any words and signs and speeches and slogans they wish to parade around are not, no matter how ludicrous the claims are.

This distinction must be realized, and the groups against the KKK must take notice of how guilty they themselves are in mirroring the threats of the Klan, when their literature speaks of putting together a coalition to "kick the Klan," and planning a "strategy to defeat the Klan when they come to Charlotte." Such statements sound alarmingly like physical actions instead of philosophical principals. If the Klan plans any harm, they must be stopped, but the same is true for anti-Klan groups-- they must be stopped if they plan physical action, even if it is carried out for what they believe to be "right."

Instead of such negative wording, to truly "actively transform," all of the intelligent and tolerant people in the Lansing area need to stay far away from the Klan rallies, and hold a separate inspirational rally that approaches the topic with compassion and logic, but without anger or confrontation. Anti-Klan groups need to tone down their rhetoric; and realize that only actions, not ideas, can ever be harmful.

Don't attempt to curtail any free speech or assembly rights, or any rights to organize or to hold an agenda. So long as there is no physical violence involved, let the Klan have their peaceful say, and let those opposed have theirs. When the two messages are received side by side, it should be apparent which one will win out, and which one will look silly.

:Michael Emhart, 0394.

Smoking Legislation: **Butt Out**

To Representative Mary Brown:

First of all, let me make it clear that I do not smoke. Never have, never will. But I do work, so please allow me to share my views on a timely work-related subject.

I work in a private marketing firm that was started 20 years ago in Lansing by one man with a vision. He took his idea from nothing to a thriving company with \$20 million in nationwide sales. This man is still the sole owner. He still works every day. He decides what new ventures we will get into, he approves the advertising. He was the mastermind behind our \$4 million computer system. He owns that software. He owns the 5 buildings we work in. He owns the desks we work at. He owns the chairs we sit in. **And that is how it should be.** It is a glorious example of free market Capitalism.

Which leads me to comment on an insidious example of out-of-control authoritarian government. There are many well-intentioned but misguided lawmakers sitting in the capitol building only 3 or 4 miles from our workplace who believe they know how to run this business better than the owner does. Their latest proposed interference is with the company smoking policy. They forget that these buildings are this man's private property, and forget that he has 20 years experience creating a company that is great to work for and great to buy from. Even though these lawmakers have never met the owner and never seen our facilities, they are suddenly determining that they know what our policy should be. And they are so sure of their omniscience and omnipotence that they are going to force the owner to adopt whatever they dictate.

What if the government mandates that a company must restrict smoking to separately ventilated rooms, and an owner refuses to do so? What happens? He (or she) is probably confronted by the police or courts and fined. Having the *silly notion that he should be*

allowed to do what he wants with the property and possessions he rightfully acquired, he stands firm in his refusal to pay. So the lawmakers would send in armed police to break down the doors, confiscate company assets, and handcuff and drag the owner to jail. Does this description seem extreme? It is not. It is exactly what would happen under the proposed law.

This legislation goes too far. A business is a private venture. No one is required to work there. No one is required to shop there. Because **businesses are based on voluntary association, the government can not assume the kind of dictatorial control over them that they are attempting here.** I do not smoke. I do not like smoke. If the owner of the company doesn't like smoke, he has every right to ban it on his property. But that is a matter to be left for us to deal with, not for some over-protective paternal government to impose on us.

Pun intended, I ask you to "butt out" of the current cigarette hysteria, whether the subject is billboards, in the malls, or in the workplace. There are real problems in Michigan with rising rapes and murders and robberies. Spend your time and energy worrying about those, not worrying about people who like to puff tobacco on their coffee breaks. I ask you to vote against all such legislation that imposes government will on private enterprise, specifically in the case of this smoking legislation; and in general in all matters where laws are proposed to restrict the options of business.

:Michael Emhart, 0494.

"A business is a private venture.

No one is forced to work there.

No one is forced to shop there."

■ Lansing State Journal
■ Tuesday, March 22, 1994

OPINION

Abortion

Informed consent a reasonable approach

Michigan's informed consent law on abortions was to take effect April 1, but now a court challenge will likely delay that.

We believe this is a reasonable law that does not impede women who may choose to have an abortion.

ABORTION: INFORMED CONSENT

The law requires a 24-hour waiting period before an abortion is performed — during which time a woman is given pamphlets and other printed material about abortions.

The law does not require a woman to look at the material, which includes a drawing of a 12-week-old fetus. Neither does the law require a woman to have counseling.

Previous legislation would have forced women to do both, and we opposed those measures. The law as passed offers women a choice. That is a critical difference.

Carol King, a spokesperson for a Michigan abortion rights group, predicts most women will throw away the pamphlets without looking at them.

That argument bolsters the law's "choice" wording. To look or not to look: The choice is each woman's to make.

We suspect the courts will eventually agree that choice, in more ways than one, is preserved by Michigan law.

■ Lansing State Journal
■ Friday, April 8, 1994

YOUR OPINIONS

No free choice

This is in response to a recent State Journal editorial on Michigan's Informed Consent abortion law:

Forcing a woman to accept a pamphlet and other printed material 24 hours before an abortion is not choice.

Choice would be a doctor voluntarily installing a rack of information describing opinions on both sides of the abortion issue, and then saying to the woman, "There is some information you may find interesting. Take whatever you like or take nothing at all."

MICHAEL EMHART,
Lansing

"I'm one of the taxpayers that has not been listened to and I'm tired of that."

:Maureen Bowyer

Meeting Stirs Policy Debate

Due to "technical difficulties" and an unexpected room change, the program at the April LAMM meeting did not proceed exactly as planned. But we have heard the expected video on taxation is a worthwhile program, so we have made sure we will be able to watch it and discuss the topic at the next meeting.

Instead of the planned program, the April meeting featured Maureen Bowyer, the Republican candidate for the 69th district in the Michigan House of Representatives. She ran in the special election on April 26 to fill the seat David Hollister occupied before becoming Mayor of Lansing. Mrs. Bowyer lost that race to Democrat Lynne Martinez, and that outcome is probably contrary to the way most of the meeting participants would have hoped for, despite some obvious differences between the candidate and other guests.

Mrs. Bowyer began with an agreeable statement advocating limited government, condemning tax increases, supporting school choice, and taking a stand against crime and against gun control. Bowyer mentioned that she is the candidate endorsed by the National Rifle Association, and the candidate "not endorsed by" the Michigan Education Association, because she favors limiting the power of the teachers union.

Mrs. Bowyer then opened the forum up to questions, and other guests proved what a "tough" group we can be when it comes to public policy. The questioning quickly pointed out differences in

opinion between participants and the candidate, specifically in the area of decriminalization of drugs. Mrs. Bowyer held the Republican party line of the dangers of drugs, and the limitations that need to be put on their use. The candidate agreed that the use of alcohol causes problems with peoples lives, she agreed that prohibition was a dismal failure, she agreed that the choice to use alcohol should rest with the individual, but she was not willing to generalize those realizations to other controlled substances.

With the conversation having turned to drug legalization, the meeting turned into multiple conversations and debates about that topic, about Constitutional rights, and a sharing of photographs of "Marked for Michigan" road signs. These separate discussions continued as the meeting drifted to a close.

The April dinner had quite a few new participants who were eager to talk and listen. This really helped to make the meeting fun and interesting. If you receive this newsletter and enjoy the ideas contained here, you would probably enjoy the extremely informal monthly dinner meetings as well. The meetings are often informative and always thought provoking. If you are interested in learning more and joining in on some interesting ways of thinking about government policy, come join us at one of the meetings. There are no costs beyond your dinner if you choose to eat, and the meeting are usually well worth the time they take. If you have never attended before, plan on it soon... you will probably find it rewarding!

The Libertarian Alliance of Mid-Michigan was founded in 1981 to promote ideas that support and enhance personal freedom, free market economics, and political liberty. The LAMM is not responsible to any other group that calls itself "libertarian." The LAMM is run without officers for the benefit of those who attend its meetings. For information about the LAMM, call Jon Addiss at 517/394-0122, or for information on the meetings, contact Michael Emhart at 517/627-0868.

The LAMM meets the second Thursday of each month. The next meeting will be:

Thursday, May 12, 1994 at Sneakers Restaurant in the Frandor Shopping Plaza, off US-127, Lansing. People begin showing up at 6:00 pm, dinner is served beginning at 6:30, and the meeting begins at 7:00.

The guest speaker will be **Robert Stepanovich**, owner of the Capital City Mortgage Company. Featured will be the video **"The IRS and Taxpayer Rights,"** and a question-and-answer discussion session.

Taxation is the subject everyone loves to hate, so come join in the constructive debate!

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"Handguns are an inherent right that's been provided to the people."
:Maureen Bowyer

An Open INVITATION...

You are invited to send in your thoughts, comments, and **Open LETTERS** on any topic pertaining to public policy, individual liberty, personal responsibility, or free market economics. Your ideas will be printed with little or no editing, and shared with hundreds of people in the mid-Michigan area. If you are a member of a group working towards increasing liberty or shaping political policy, send in updates about what you are doing... there are many others who may like to join you.

Open LETTER is edited and laid out in the **Freedom Reading Room** by **Michael Emhart**. Printing is paid for by **Liberty Coins**. Postage is paid for by **Jon Addiss**. The views printed here are not necessarily the opinions of the editor or sponsors, although most **Interested Parties** probably do agree!

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THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

I like the idea of "Three Strikes and You're Out"-- life sentences for criminals who commit 3 violent offenses. But why don't we enact a similar program for the biggest crooks of all-- the Senators and Representatives in our State and Federal Legislatures? We can watch their voting and count: "Strike One," a vote to raise taxes; "Strike Two," a vote against individual liberty; "Strike Three," imposing a new regulation on business; "You're Out!"-- automatic loss of the job we sent them there to do. This would be the most effective kind of "Capitol Punishment."

Taxation is the root of all evil-- find out your rights at the Thursday, May 12 LAMM meeting. (See inside)

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