

LIBERTY TODAY

A PUBLICATION OF THE L.P.W.M.
DECEMBER, 1991.

LIBERTARIAN PARTY OF WEST MICHIGAN BECOMES A PHOENIX

On October 12, 1991, thirteen brave individuals met in Grand Rapids to reestablish an active LP organization in the West Michigan area. They selected formal bylaws and elected various attendees to the executive committee.

National Committee Representative, and former Kent County Chair, Bill Hall, addressed the group, followed by local activist Todd Greene, who presented a set of bylaws which were accepted after some modification. Officers and project managers were then elected according to the bylaws.

A total of one hundred dollars was donated by various individuals at the meeting to give the Libertarian Party of West Michigan (LPWM) something to work with. (Thanks go to Glenn Barr, Ryan Baughan, Michael Gillman, Todd & Sharon Greene, Bill & Vicki Hall, Baird Hawkins, Hugh Prager, and Dick Whitelock for their contributions.)

The Executive Committee consists of four officers and three project managers. LPWM bylaws allow for the election of up to five additional project managers.

Executive committee members are:

Chair: Todd Greene
Vice-Chair: Michael Gillman
Secretary: Sharon Greene
Treasurer: Glenn Barr
Newsletter Ed: Bill Hall
Media Relations Ed: Baird Hawkins
College Outreach Ed: Dick Prager

Among proposed LPWM activities are consistent contact with various media, availability of LP speakers for high school and college government classes, timely response to and follow-up with information for interested persons, local fund-raising, LP information booth presence at local events, and the upcoming Tax Protest Day.

Sharon Greene - LPWM Secretary

GETTING THE MESSAGE OUT

Welcome, and thank you, for choosing to take a closer look at the Libertarian Party of West Michigan's inaugural newsletter. As is the goal of any other type of publication, this newsletter has been created with the express intention of getting the message out -- getting the message of the Libertarian Party out to the people of Western Michigan, and allowing a forum where we may voice our opinions and concerns, to those who may perhaps have similar views.

The task of assembling and editing such an opus could be an effort for the most dedicated of Libertarians, and is made doubly difficult for myself, because I actually know very little about the Libertarian philosophy; I've been a party member for a little over a month now. My membership is borne out of a frustration with the "system" and an increasing trend toward what I consider to be a police state. Frustration with the tendency of bipartisan hardliners to play power games that ensure their own comfortable lifestyles and fat pensions, but accomplish very little for their own constituents.

But what exactly is the Libertarian Party, how does it pertain to today's issues, and how is it different from the cesspool politics of the '80s and '90s? Since it's probably important for the editor of the Libertarian newsletter to know the Libertarian philosophy, I went straight to some notable West Michigan Libertarians for the answers. Some of these answers you'll find in the pages of this newsletter. Others may be highlighted in future editions. And of course, I may totally overlook something that you find terribly important. This won't be the last time. But, believe me, your input is invaluable.

Write us. Tell us your opinions, and space permitting, we'll tell the world, or at least our corner of it. Grow with us! We are a fledgling organization now, but wait and see.

If you wish to become a member now, great, we're glad to have you. If you would rather take a "wait and see" approach, then read on; I invite you to join me (and tolerate my lapses into ignorance) in finding out what this "Libertarian Party" is all about.

Ryan Baughan - Editor

Libertarian Party of West Michigan

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Marrou & Lord In '92

I first cast a vote for a libertarian in 1980, when Ed Clark ran for president. Like many others, I was disappointed when Ed only drew about a million votes. While I did not expect him to win, I expected him to win more than a million votes. I had a touch of the mind set of many people, fostered by the media, that an election is a horse race and any candidate who doesn't win the election is a loser.

Since that time, I've had plenty of opportunity for reflection, and I now see the fallaciousness of that idea. A candidate is a loser only if the candidate doesn't achieve the goals he or she has set for the campaign. If you talk to Ed Clark today, he will tell you that he had no delusions that he would win. He will probably tell you that he hoped to receive more votes. He should tell you, with pride, that he succeeded in forging the first nationwide third party in America in many decades. Ed Clark was a winner, not a loser.

You and I should keep this point in mind during the course of the Marrou/Lord campaign. We will be tempted to judge the Libertarian presidential campaign by the same standards of success as the Republicans and Democrats. However, we would be comparing apples and oranges. George Bush may have "won" in 1988 with promises of "no new taxes, a balanced budget, and world peace." I, for one, was not surprised when he violated each of those promises. The Republican and Democratic party labels mean very little when it comes to defining your principles.

You and I may get caught up in the hype, and convince ourselves that there is a real chance for a major breakthrough in the number of votes received. Perhaps there is. However, more importantly, there is a real opportunity to achieve some very significant victories. A dramatic increase in Libertarian Party membership. A significant increase in the number of Libertarian Party contributors, prospects, and supporters. Higher levels of experience among Libertarian candidates, campaigners, and spokespersons. More recognition of and respect for Libertarian ideas. And yes, possibly some more votes.

But Andre Marrou and Nancy Lord cannot achieve these goals alone. Most of the work must be done by us. They can draw some media attention and perhaps collect names of prospects. However, the lion's share of the work must be done here, at the local level, in west Michigan. A voter may be favorably impressed by media coverage of the presidential campaign, but he or she will be more likely to vote for a Libertarian candidate for a local office. You and I should give them that opportunity by running candidates for

truly local offices, such as county commissioner. Let's involve some of those prospects Andre and Nancy find for us in active local campaigns, where their help can make a difference. The county commissioners of today are the state legislators of tomorrow and the presidents of next week. Let's make Andre Marrou and Nancy Lord winners. We will be winners too.

Bill Hall - LP National Committee Representative

DRUGS: LEGALIZE OR DECRIMINALIZE?

Amid the hysteria and paranoia over drug prohibition, two different views have taken shape. One side is comprised of people who believe that voluntary drug use should be condemned by enforcing strict and uncompromising criminal penalties. William Bennett, the U.S. drug "czar" has proposed the chopping off of heads, the shooting down of unarmed civilian aircraft, and the seizure of all private property where drugs are found, whether the innocent owners of such property are implicated or not. Such police-state tactics, while un-American, are rampant among those who advocate criminal penalties for voluntary drug use.

The opposing view is more prudent and tolerant, and is based on the Constitutional rights of the individual.

Arguments from prohibitionists have completely ignored the rights of the individual and have contained many statements based solely on clouded assumptions instead of fact.

"If drugs were legal, drug usage and addiction would increase dramatically" is a much used crutch of the self-anointed crusaders for drug prohibition.

If this were true, why wasn't almost everyone in this country a drug addict prior to the 1914 Harrison Act which made drugs illegal?

Why aren't the people in Columbia who grow the stuff and have daily access to unlimited amounts of it, all drug addicts?

Why, in the Netherlands, where most drugs were decriminalized in 1980, has the number of new addicts gone down each year?

Everyone who advocates hard-core statism for drug prohibition should ask themselves: "If drugs were legal, would I become an addict?"

CONTINUED - FROM PAGE TWO

Probably the most confusing dialogue among those who are opposed to drug prohibition is the question of *legalization or decriminalization*? There's a big difference between the two.

Legalization implies that the use of drugs would be approved or condoned by society. Libertarians do not share that view. We do not approve of, condone, or advocate the use of dangerous drugs. We do, however, consistently support and defend the right of individuals to conduct their lives as they choose so long as they accept the consequences for their actions. Government should have no role in deciding what freedoms a person chooses to exercise.

Government has wrongly placed voluntary drug use in the category of criminal activity when it is actually an issue of health and should be treated with tolerance, education, and rehabilitation.

Many who have spoken in favor of legalization have said that the government should regulate drug distribution and even enact heavy taxation on its users. This kind of action would provide the same drastic consequences that have been associated with government's distribution of alcohol.

Since the repeal of prohibition in 1933, government control has not provided a solution to the problems related to the use and abuse of alcohol. Government has complete control of distribution and sales. All alcoholic beverages are heavily taxed by both federal and state governments. Users and abusers are subjected to extreme civil and criminal penalties, but the problem still persists. As a "legal" drug, alcohol is second only to nicotine as the most deadly in terms of lives lost.

Legalization of drugs which are now prohibited would have the same effect. The criminal underground would be eliminated and government would take its place. Huge profits from drug sales would go into government coffers instead of lining the pockets of criminals, corrupt judges, police officials, and politicians. Gang wars, murder, robbery, and other drug related crimes would be replaced by government prosecution of individuals who would use or abuse these newly legalized drugs.

Which is more important and Constitutionally correct, government's police-state mentality that labels millions of innocent Americans as criminals, or an individual's right to conduct his own life as he wishes so long as he accepts the consequences for his actions?

Decriminalization would accomplish much more.

The 40 million Americans who voluntarily choose to use some kind of recreational drug could do so without fear of

harassment or criminal prosecution from government, and their individual right to own their own body would be fully restored.

A free market supply of substances would provide competition from legitimate businesses. Drugs would be of purer quality, costs would be lowered accordingly, and most drug-related criminal activity would cease.

Without the enormous profit structure and criminal control of the market, judges, police officials, and politicians would not have the incentives to be involved in corrupt activities.

Untold billions of tax dollars could be saved. New prison construction could be halted and existing prison space could be reserved for people who have been convicted of violent crimes. An entire bureaucratic level of government (the DEA) could be abolished. Judges and police agencies at all levels of government could concentrate their efforts on apprehending and prosecuting dangerous criminals instead of devoting most of their time to the harassment, arrest, and criminal prosecution of people who are guilty of nothing more than the possible, voluntary abuse of their own bodies.

In the single year of 1989, New York City police made 120,000 drug arrests compared with 47,000 in 1985. These numbers do not reflect the untold man hours devoted to sting operations, months and years of undercover work, special drug forces, etc. Drug enforcement techniques of this magnitude have clogged the courts and frustrated judges have been unable to cope with the problem of already over-crowded prisons.

Add these figures to drug enforcement efforts throughout the entire country and a much clearer picture of the futility of the government's drug war is presented.

The most pressing issue is this: *Who owns your body? You, or the politicians, or some other segment of society who doesn't like what you are doing with your self?*

The government's "war on drugs" is not a war at all. It is a political obsession to violate the most precious guarantee of our American heritage -- the individual right of every American citizen who voluntarily chooses to act in a manner that government doesn't like.

History has proven that government screws up just about everything they get involved in. So, with drugs -- don't legalize. Keep government out of the drug business. Decriminalize all drug related activity and return America to a nation of sanity instead of blind obsession.

Richard Whitlock - LP Candidate for U.S. Rep., 5th District

Ex Cathedra

W A N T E D!

News In Perspective

The Libertarian Party of West Michigan has been launched! Destination: Growth and Political Influence.

What are we planning? I'll mention just three items in this issue:

(1) We will give a quality response to those who request information from us about the LP. A quality response means an introductory packet in the mail to the requestor within 24 hours of receiving the request. This packet will provide the requestor with information about libertarianism and the LP in general and about the LPWM in particular. (Our Secretary is Sharon Greene.)

(2) We will maintain consistent media contact with the local media regarding LPWM activities, views on current issues, and LP candidates. (Our Media Relations Manager is Baird Hawkins.)

(3) We will begin to establish a presence on college campuses in the area. (Our College Outreach Manager is Jim Pruitt.)

What would we like to plan? I'll mention just two items now:

(1) We will soon be sending a letter to all of the high school and college government teachers in Kent County (and in other West Michigan counties at a later date) offering LP representatives to speak to their classes. If you are interested in introducing libertarianism and the LP to students, please contact the LPWM as soon as possible! (Our soon-to-be official Speakers Manager is John Tallman.)

(2) We also need a Fund-Raising Manager to help raise funds for all of these LPWM activities. We are going to increase the membership and influence of the LP in West Michigan, and this takes money in addition to time and effort! Are you interested in managing the LPWM's fund-raising? Let us know. Your assistance is greatly desired.

Elsewhere in this issue you'll find the names of those who attended the organizational meeting on October 12, and of those who were elected to the executive committee. I want to thank each and every one of them for putting forth time, effort, and money!

Please send relevant material for this newsletter to our Newsletter Manager, Ryan Baughman. (I want to thank Ryan for taking on this project.)

This column will be a regular feature of this newsletter. I will be using it to continue to keep you informed about what we are planning and what we would like to plan. I will also use it to keep before you our goals. And I will use it to "preach" libertarianism on occasion.

P.S.: For those of you who don't read Latin, "ex cathedra" means simply "from the chair."

Todd Greene, LPWM Chair

MATERIAL FOR LPWM NEWSLETTER

- (1) Clippings or copies of local news articles about privatization, volunteer efforts, and government waste and abuse in West Michigan.
- (2) Articles by libertarians about projects relevant to libertarianism they are involved in.
- (3) Letters-to-the-editor by libertarians that have been published (please send clippings or copy from the periodical it appeared in -- and be sure to indicate the name of the periodical and the date it was published).
- (4) You're a Libertarian cartoonist! Send us your cartoon on a current political issue!
- (5) And, of course, letters to the LPWM Newsletter Editor.

Deadline for next issue: January 24, 1992

EDITORIAL PAGES

FACTS TO PONDER

- > The federal government ended fiscal year 1991 with a record \$288.7 billion deficit. (a)
- > The White House projected deficit for fiscal 1992 is \$348.3 billion. (a)
- > Even with current cutbacks, Michigan's spending in the current fiscal year is slated to rise 14% from fiscal 1991 to \$40.11 billion. (a)
- > During the 1991-92 recession, 40 states (including Michigan) raised taxes, and consequently their "revenues" rose faster than federal "revenue." (a)
- > In 1991, 31 states have raised taxes a combined total of \$15 billion -- a record state tax increase (the previous high was 1990's \$10.3 billion). (a)
- > As a percentage of the previous year's tax collections, current state tax increases represent the largest rise -- 5% -- since 1971. The bulk of these increases occurred in California (16 billion), Pennsylvania (13 billion), Texas (\$1 billion), and Connecticut (\$1 billion). (a)
- > Federally imposed state spending requirements on such programs as Medicaid has grown as a share of state budgets from 10% to 14% during the past five years. (a)
- > Under Governor John Engler, layoffs have shrank the state work force by about a thousand people -- but this is less than 2%. (a)
- > "Revenue" from alcoholic beverages and tobacco taxes made up 8% of all tax collections in 1970; in 1993 it was only 3%. (b)
- > "Revenue" from individual income taxes made up 19% of all tax collections in 1970; in 1989 it was 31%. (b)
- > Nearly one out of every four children under six years old lives in poverty. In 1987, 23% of all children under six years old were living at or below the poverty line. (b)

TAX PROTEST DAY 1992

Did you know that abolishing the personal income tax right now would only roll federal "revenues" back to 1987 levels? Did you know that federal income taxes were declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court twice in the 19th century (thus requiring a formal amendment)? Did you know that Indians had nothing to do with throwing tea into the Boston harbor?

Taxation is immoral! And the income tax is the most immoral of taxes! Tax Protest Day is the Libertarian Party's nationwide annual demonstration against this major government abuse. On April 15, 1992, Libertarians across the country will gather in front of their local post offices with protest signs and literature.

The LPWM is looking for a Project Manager to coordinate volunteers for TPD '92 in this area. If you are interested in this project, as manager or volunteer, please contact the LPWM at (616) 456-5355. Now is the time to begin planning for this event. Tax Protest Day will arrive faster than you might think!

Letters

GIVE CONGRESS SOME TIME OFF

After reading several articles recently about our Congress that were pro and con, I feel I have an idea on how to cut the deficit.

Because the members of Congress put their interests before the interest of the country, I suggest we give them all an unpaid leave of absence for at least one year. Think of all the savings! All those salaries for members of Congress and their staffs; their perks; the pork-barrel projects; and other unnecessary spending bills.

Members of Congress would find out what the real world is like. They would actually have to pay for their own cost of living like normal U.S. citizens do. This might be a shock to them and their sins and bring them back down to earth.

Now if I could only think of a way to get rid of some of those old incumbents. The above also applies to the Legislature in Lansing.

Russ Cronberg - Pullman, Michigan
(reprinted from *The Grand Rapids Press*, 11/24/91)

LPWM AT CHANNEL 8'S "ROUND TABLE"

Five members of the LPWM attended Channel 8's "Round Table" on the Drug War, on October 27. Regular host of "Live At 5," Tom Van Howe, hosted the live television program in the Gerald R. Ford museum auditorium.

A panel of five and a participating audience of over 200 engaged in an always lively and sometimes heated discussion of the issues surrounding current drug prohibition policies. The panel included attorney Donald M. Heavrin, Drug Policy Foundation representative; Bob Peterson, Michigan's current "drug czar"; and Bruce Neckers, President of the Grand Rapids Bar Association.

LPWM members in the audience were Ryan Baughman, Michael Gillman, Sharon & Todd Greene, and Dick Whitelock. Todd Greene, Chair of the LPWM, stated on the program that, "Government does not have the right to break into our homes and dictate what we can and can't do with our own bodies." If you would like to view a tape of this program, contact the LPWM.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DEC 5, Thursday, 3pm. Press Conference for Libertarian Presidential Candidate Andre Maroon at the Press Club. Location: 200 Ottawa NW, Grand Rapids.

DEC 14, Saturday, 7-9pm. LPWM Executive Committee Meeting (every second Saturday of the month). Location: TBD.

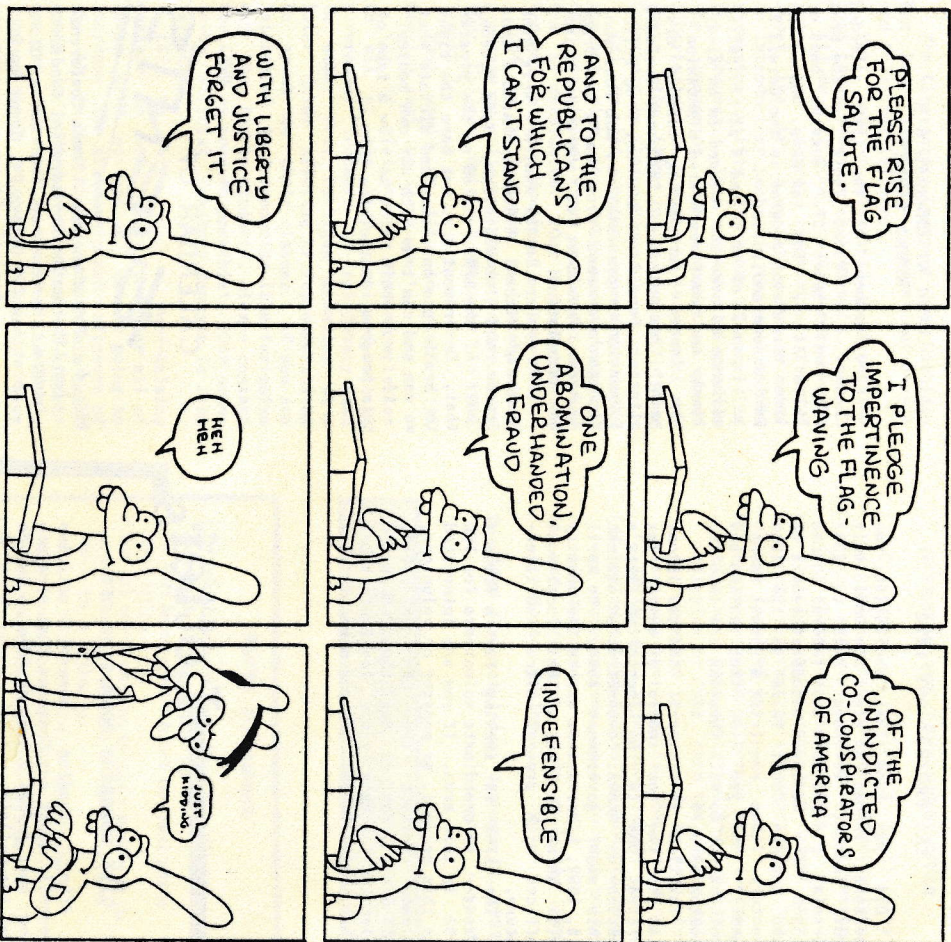
JAN 11, Saturday, 7-9pm. LPWM Executive Committee Meeting. Location: TBD.

JAN 18, Saturday, 7-9 pm. Discussion meeting for new LP members and others who are interested in discussing libertarian ideas (every third Saturday of the month). A discussion facilitator will be present, and participation by each person who attends is encouraged. If you are interested, please contact Todd Greene at 456-5355.

JAN 18, Saturday. Deadline for submissions to LPWM Newsletter (every next-to-last Saturday of every other month).

LIFE IN
HELL

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MATT
GREENING



Candidate Visits Michigan

Bill Sholey - LP of Michigan
Membership Comm. Chair

The Libertarian Party 1992 candidate for Vice-President of the United States, Dr. Nancy Lord, visited Michigan October 23-26. She began with a speech to the Kewanee Club in Dearborn and ended with a speech at the Libertarian Week Banquet in Livonia. In between, she had lunch with Detroit City Councilman Keith Butler, visited the University of Michigan, participated in two radio talk shows in the Lansing area, and had a press conference in Lansing.

Nancy Lord is both a licensed physician and a practicing attorney in the Washington, D.C. area. In 1990, Dr. Lord was the Libertarian mayoral candidate in Washington. Her campaign attracted favorable attention from both

the public and the media. The Washington Post called Dr. Lord "the Patrick Moynihan of Washington politics... [because of]...her consistently original and interesting ideas."

Dr. Lord is a native of the Washington metropolitan area and has been politically active for many years, working with such organizations as the Drug Policy Foundation, National Abortion Rights Action League, National Drug Strategy Network, National Rifle Association, National Taxpayers Union, and the National Tax Limitation committee. She is currently the Chair of the New Guard of the District of Columbia, a coalition of progressive political activists.

MEMBERSHIP IS FREE,
YOUR DONATION IS REQUESTED

The LPWM Executive Committee set membership dues at \$0! If you wish to join the Libertarian Party of West Michigan, just fill out the form elsewhere in this issue (sign the statement signifying your agreement with the libertarian principle) and mail it to us.

On the other hand, as with any volunteer organization, we need money! Your donation is crucial to our operation.

Typically speaking, people want to know what they will get for their money. What will your donation to the LPWM do? It will pay production expenses and

postage for the newsletter. It will rent the Press Club downtown for press conferences. It will buy introductory literature to mail out to inquirers about libertarianism. It will pay for materials to be used at discussion meetings for those who want to find out more and talk about libertarian ideas. In the future it may pay for political survey material to be used on college campuses, for a booth rental space at a fair, or for a billboard along U.S. 131. And so on.

Your donation to the LPWM will buy you LP membership growth and increased LP influence in West Michigan!

I would like to find out more about the Libertarian Party and what it stands for. Please send me more information about the LPWM, and how I may become involved.

Enclosed, find my donation of:

_____ \$100
_____ \$ 50
_____ \$ 25
_____ \$ 10

I cannot afford a donation at this time, but please keep me posted on Libertarian events.

Libertarian Party Bylaws state that members are those who "have certified in writing that they oppose the initiation of force to achieve political or social goals, and I so certify.

Signature _____

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

make checks payable to the LPWM. Thank you!