

Let Freedom Ring

CMLC Liberator

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Letters to the Editor

We should think about the Norton campaign and see where our votes came from, and what worked. My observation (the Springfield side of the District) is that hardly anyone voted. That means that Keough's friends, relatives, constables, cops, and other city and county employees dominated the election. In general the Greeks (Fyntrilackis supporters) stayed home, as did Aseline supporters. Keough had more yard signs than he got votes. There were four candidates, but only two platforms. Irish who owned firearms (as well as Greeks) voted for people who would confiscate them.

I scanned the results looking for exceptions. Norton did better in Springfield's Precinct 2C, heavily Puerto Rican. The night Robinson and I leafleted there, many were sitting on their front porches, so I could talk to some of them. Most spoke mostly Spanish, which I speak. Norton Literature was available in Spanish. Since they have no connections to the Irish patronage system (except a few politicians) many have not voted. Instead of discussing theory we talked about the cost of renewing a Driver's License, taxes on tobacco, and laws against gambling. Puerto Rican culture has no history of disfavor toward gambling or tobacco, and most would agree that license fees are too expensive.

I think we have to get new voters to win. **We should also rethink our advertising.** Keough sells insurance and meets hundreds of people a week. When you put up a sign with his name on it, everyone knows who it is. That is not true for the relatively unknown Libertarian candidates. The advertising must answer the question "Why should I vote Libertarian instead of Democratic?" The answer I give my father is "because Roosevelt is dead".

...Robert Underwood

Late News Bulletin: Born to Joan and John Brickner, a son, Duncan Alexander Bricker, 9/15/99, 8 pounds, 10 ounces, 21"

PVLA/CMLC Candidates

Your fellow members who plan to run for Town and State Committees of the Libertarian Party:

State Committee (Knapik District)

State Committeeman: Alvin See

State Committeewoman: Sally H. Howes

Chicopee Ward Committee: Pit and Pam Warren
Paul Norton

Holyoke Ward Committee: Sally Howes, Mark Shar

Monson Ward Committee: Carol McMahon

Springfield Ward 2 Committee: Robert Underwood

Westfield Ward Committee: Alvin See

The Disaster of Disaster Relief

Pit Warren pit.warren@excell.net

People often skip over political articles to find items that are newsworthy. The media reports every disaster in great detail, following major catastrophes for days or weeks. Death sells. People, even the ghoulish, have to feel compassion for the dead, injured and homeless. Recent news stories include following a hurricane, taking pictures of earthquake victims and videotaping forest fires out west. Wherever there is destruction, heartache and pain, we will watch and often help.

The American Red Cross was on hand to help people when a massive fire took out a block in Holyoke. Local disk jockeys fill trucks with food and supplies for flood victims and the homeless. Many people in many private institutions

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Libertarianism, Moralism, and Alan Turing

This year marks the forty-fifth anniversary of the death of Alan Turing the great British mathematician whose contributions to the field of artificial intelligence was seminal in the development of the computer. He is best known as the conceiver of the great thought-experiment known as the "Turing Machine," an imaginary universal apparatus that could be adapted to virtually any sequential or cumulative thought process. Turings work decisively dethroned traditional metaphysical argument as the vehicle for logical analysis, after traditional metaphysics had already been weakened by the earlier theories of Bertrand Russell, Wittgenstein, and the logical positivists.

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Libertarian Party has at its disposal. On the substantial level, Local Organization is clearly the most effective strategy our party has.

On the practical level, the Membership Recruitment strategy and a strong central party organization create unnecessary risks for the Libertarian movement. Local Organization avoids those dangers. Membership Recruitment makes it difficult to compare the effectiveness of different strategies. Local Organization supports such comparisons. Membership Recruitment results in a national organization vulnerable to fiscal or ideological diversion. Local Organization creates a quiltwork of groups that effectively capture all resources and are largely immune to diversion. Someone may divert a group here or there, but the quilt remains intact. (I emphasize that I am not proposing to eliminate all national organization. The national Party has important positive roles to play within the Local Organization strategy.)

No matter whether you consider questions of principle, questions of substance, or practical issues, the answer is always the same:

Local Organization is the best way to advance our Party.

We've spent 20 years trying variations on Membership Recruitment. We've kept doing what we've always done, and we've kept getting what we've always gotten. And we haven't gotten very much.

It's time for a change. It's time for the Libertarian Party to try a better strategy—Local Organization.

Membership Dues

Are you a PVLA/CMLC Member?

We've lowered Dues. Your Editor is carrying part of the bill. However, for mail subscribers, there's such a thing as real expenses that must be covered. If you want Let Freedom Ring, please send money. To receive Let Freedom Ring—CMLC Liberator by mail, we are obliged to ask \$10 a year.

Dues will cover the next 12 issues of CMLC Liberator — Let Freedom Ring.

The Pioneer Valley Libertarian Association is Massachusetts' oldest local Libertarian organization, with regular meetings since 1995. The PVLA and its sister Central Massachusetts Liberty Coalition work to advance freedom across Massachusetts' 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Congressional Districts, stretching from Williamstown to Dartmouth. Read more about the PVLA and CMLC on their web sites, <http://www.wmlp.org> and <http://www.cmlc.org>. The PVLA and CMLC web sites are hosted by Excell.net (<http://www.excell.net>) a locally-owned, locally operated internet service provider offering solutions to people and businesses in the Pioneer Valley. Why not patronize a fellow Libertarian? See www.excell.net for internet service.



Let Freedom Ring
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Worcester MA 01605

First Class Mail

(Continued from page 1) **(Pit Warren on Disaster Relief, Continued)**

devote huge sums of money and energy to helping others. I have witnessed first-hand the miracles performed at the Shriner's Hospital in Springfield and I can tell you for a fact that there is no finer place to send your contributions. The Jimmy Fund is also a great humanitarian effort.

With all this wonderful private effort, one wonders why we have to have federal disaster relief. In the past decades, the number of "disaster areas" has nearly doubled. Every hurricane season gets us to pay for damage to beach property. Seasonal flooding becomes a disaster when rains are heavier than normal. There is now an average of one disaster" in this country per week. Federal funds flow with incredible ease. Hundreds of millions are tossed about like tips at a fancy restaurant. Don't these people have insurance? If they can't get insurance, there is probably a reason.

The recent disaster in Turkey was met with an immediate tax increase. The government responded as well as it could, I suppose. This led me to wonder what will happen when the Big One hits L.A. Those of you who watch nature shows about geology and tectonics are aware of the upcoming cataclysm. Millions of people have knowingly built on or near a major fault line. Whose fault is that? The tens of thousands dead in Turkey will seem like a drop in the bucket. A massive quake will hit southern California sometime within the next 70-80 years. Who will pay to rebuild the Hollywood mansions? Guess.

Someone should stop and think about where all our money is going. Is it cost-effective to do it through the government? Recent revelations show that IMF loans to Russia were quickly stolen and laundered back to U.S. banks in some weird, high-speed boomerang effect. It is safe to assume that the disaster relief funds are as easily misappropriated. Sure, some money makes it to the needy. But what is the actual percentage and how does that compare with private philanthropic groups?

Some guidelines for providing disaster relief should be laid down that don't have anything to do with whose district it is and how they voted. If you build on a floodplain, you should not expect someone else to pay you to shovel the muck out of your living room. If the private insurance companies know when people are taking excessive risk, why doesn't the government? Wouldn't it be more efficient to let people settle their own claims?

Disaster relief, which is usually rebuilding in harm's way, seems to encourage people to be irresponsible. Before we truck sand in to a washed out beach, someone should think about why the beach disappeared in the first place. Perhaps, it just wasn't meant to be there and we should let the ocean have it. Even if we don't eliminate federal disaster relief, it is obvious to me that the system needs an overhaul.

Pit Warren was the 1998 Libertarian Party Candidate for State Senate in Massachusetts.

(Continued from page 1) **(Alan Turing, continued)**

Why should Libertarians care about Turing? Turing, an Englishman, returned to Britain after getting his doctorate at Princeton. During World War II he dedicated his prodigious talents to the allied intelligence effort. More than any single person he deserves credit for breaking the German "Enigma" code--an achievement that arguably saved Britain from the Reich. Due to the need for secrecy, he never received the accolades he deserved, even in the post-war era.

Turing was also a homosexual. England, like the United States, prided itself in being a democracy that guaranteed personal liberty. Nevertheless, homosexuality was illegal. The moralists and religionists of that day, as today, considered homosexuality immoral and therefore subject to state sanction--just as today the moralists and religionist are similarly selective about what they permit under the rubric of "liberty." The difference was that society in that day was less enlightened, and the traditionalists were in the majority. Accordingly, Turing was convicted of sodomy. He was given a choice of prison or "hormone therapy" to cure him of his "unnatural" urges. At first he bore the therapy, its attendant physical effects and humiliations with fortitude, then he died after eating a cyanide-laced apple he concocted, his death being ruled a suicide.

And they ask me why I am a Libertarian, and why I am so insistant that moral, spiritual or religious matters be utterly beyond the pale for government, either through direct coercion, or governmental restructuring to allow the mob to bring to bear its prejudices onto the lives of free individuals. The hatred, loathing and viciousness of the mob against anything it considers weird or different, the need to degrade, suppress, or abolish anything that goes against original premises, is a common--if somewhat base--human tendency. When it restricts individual liberty it simply must be checked. Such a check against internal coercion of the individual should be a primary function of an enlightened state through its fundamental laws and independent courts.

....Chris Costanzo secur@sover.net

PVLA Minutes -- September Meeting

The PVLA met at Bickford's in Chicopee on September 8. New member Carol McMahon was introduced. Future meetings were discussed. We came to a consensus:

First Thursday in October-The Libertarian group that usually meets in Waltham, and that includes many members of the LAMA and LPMA Boards, will be meeting in Western Massachusetts. Phillies was in touch with Richard Freedman, Libertarian candidate for Newton school board, who made sure that the issue was brought up repeatedly at their last meeting. They have not yet (9/8) done detailed planning for this meeting. Their minutes indicated they are considering meeting at the Wild Boar in Wilbraham. (They have since decided to meet at the Springfield Bickford's; a report on this meeting will appear in the next issue.) PVLA Members will be notified as soon as we learn anything defi-

nite.

**Second Wednesday in October--We will meet here.
Usual time, usual place.**

Late September/Early October: Worcester Libertarians of all parties will try to have a meeting. Place and time are not yet tied down (and still aren't; Worcester as a hard place for sites). Provisional speakers were Jerry Horton, a Libertarian and ex-LPMA member who is a candidate for city council, and our own George Phillies, Libertarian former candidate for Congress.

Run for Town and State Committee. We have several candidates for state committee, and a bunch of people committed to run for town committee. Nominating papers were circulated, so that everyone likely to run for office has one. It is not clear how much benefit we get out of having these groups in addition to having the PVLA and the CMLC. However, we run for office now, or can't until 2003.
Do it now, or spend the next four years wishing that you had.

Town committees have some powers that other groups lack. For example, they can make arbitrarily large gifts in kind to candidates in their district. They can get names of registered voters directly from their town clerks. They provide a record of elective office for people who want to run for other offices later. Phillips will generate a list of known libertarians in your town -- based on data from his campaigns and PVLA name searches -- if you want to try running

Subscriptions for Let Freedom Ring/CMLC Liberator: It was agreed after some thought to set the rates at \$10 per year, based on an 8 page newsletter, and to launch a campaign to get subscribers. For CMLC members, this amounts to a 50% reduction in the subscription rates. A major consideration was to use pricing to difference us from the other Libertarian group in the state, which is up at \$25 per year.

The filing for "Liberty Tree, the Small Government, Low Tax Political Action Committee" (hereinafter Liberty Tree) has been made. Sally Howes is Chair; Phillips is Treasurer. Officers cannot be candidates for public office; neither is at present a candidate. We need to get approved, get an IRS number, and get a bank account. We will then be able to accept donations. With luck, this happens in the current millennium.

To have booths to recruit members and advertise our positions, we often need things to sell just to get through the door. The sales also raise money. Possible items were discussed, including Bergland's Libertarianism book, children's books including the Jonathan Gullible book and the Princess Visits series, and/or perhaps Carol Moore's book on Waco. A serious gap is visible in terms of Libertarian items on social issues was noted. Pricing will be investigated. A member has large numbers of various pamphlets that we could distribute, mostly from the ISIL. He will make these available by bringing them to the next meeting. The pamphlets have an address block. It needs the old CMLC address replaced with a new PVLA address.

Excerpts from George Phillips' forthcoming book

Stand Up for Liberty!

Chapter Three

Local Organization

The Path to Libertarian Victory

Summary

In this Chapter, I discuss the reasons that Libertarians should use to choose their party's strategy. The reasons are answers to questions of principle, questions of substance, and purely practical questions. All reasons support the same choice of strategy.

Principles are our Libertarian understanding about how the world works. Our principles reveal that small government, low taxes, the entire Bill of Rights, and the invisible hand of the market will bring us to the Libertarian future of peace, prosperity and freedom. Our principles also tell us why freedom and the market give better results than any other approach: A small leadership elite can never have the depth of information and wisdom that is held by the populace as a whole.

Issues of substance are limitations imposed on us by the outside world. Some policies work better than others because they make more effective use of resources. Others are less effective because they ignore how human nature works. Questions of substance have the same effect on every political Party: Democratic, Republican, Green,..., and Libertarian.

Practical issues arise because some people are imperfect. They may be lazy or shortsighted or just plain crooked. A good strategy recognizes that some people may create challenges. A good strategy minimizes the damage such people can do. A sound strategy will protect the Libertarian movement from the consequences of unwise or unscrupulous leadership.

Questions of Principle

Why should we act as our moral principles dictate?

The less important reason that we should follow our principles is that we preach Libertarianism to society. If we run our Party on non-Libertarian lines, our fellow citizens will see we are hypocrites: Obviously, we don't really believe in Libertarianism, because if we did our party would follow Libertarian principles in its own organization.

The more important reason that we should follow our principles is that our principles are right. Our principles correctly describe human nature, and how best to use human nature to build a better world: Society should be allowed to organize itself, rather than suffer organization from above by an elite cabal. A political Party--any Party, Libertarian or not-- structured on non-Libertarian principles won't work as well as a party whose organization is consistent with Libertarian principles.

What do our principles dictate?

Libertarian principles include individual freedom, individual choice respectful of other people's rights, and the practical and moral superiority of the market. Most Libertarians realize that a socialist central government is essentially always less effective than the invisible hand of the market and the collective wisdom of millions of human beings.

In his book *Libertarianism---A Primer*, Boaz shows that planning works only for the simplest processes. Central planning can build an air traffic control system that directs a few airliners. For this task, the Federal Aviation Administration requires huge numbers of computers and employees. To control the far larger number of cars driving on a Saturday morning, a Federal Automobile Administration car traffic control system is just plain impossible. There is no alternative to the simple rules of the road and spontaneous self-organization. The catchphrase "strong, effective, central planning" is a hopeless oxymoron. The incompetence of central planning is not merely party dogma. Central planning's failure is a demonstrated fact. An inner circle of bureaucrats in a distant capital essentially always has less brainpower, a poorer grasp of the facts, weaker motivation, and a lesser sense of responsibility than the people on the scene. A coal industry run by a National Coal Board really is worse than a coal industry run by competing private entrepreneurs. Central bureaucracies also get hijacked by special-interest groups with their own agendas.

The market provides the invisible hand that guides men and women toward effective decisions. Monopolies spontaneously fail in the face of competition, because the cost of creating a true monopoly creates inefficiencies that cause the monopoly to fail and be replaced. Competition roots out inefficiency, allowing the best ideas to rise to the top.

The invisible hand works as well in the marketplace of ideas as in any other marketplace. In the intellectual free market, a group sells itself by providing goods and services (newsletters, events, candidates, publications, candidate support) that party members want to support. If the group keeps promises and provides good services, it grows and thrives. If the group fails to keep promises and delivers poor services, it suffers at the market's invisible hand. It loses volunteers, voters, and donations. The invisible hand steers the group ***or its successor*** to more effective policies.

I stress ***or its successor***. The market cannot compel a group to adopt sound policies. A group can certainly keep making bad decisions until the invisible hand writes mene mene tekil upharsin: You have been weighed and found wanting and shall now become one with the snows of yesteryear. We clearly prefer that the Libertarian Party succeeds, rather than going so badly astray that it fails and is replaced. Replacement is slow and expensive. However, the outcome is up to us. We recognize the validity of

the market, so we recognize that the judgement of the market may turn irrevocably against a vendor who makes too many bad decisions.

What do our Libertarian principles say about possible Libertarian strategies?

In the Membership Recruitment strategy, the Unified Membership Plan means that state groups effectively become franchisees of a single national apparatus. Activists, donors, and voters who want to support the local group must support the national organization, and vice versa. Local groups grow when the national Party's recruiting efforts succeed, rather than gaining or losing members in response to their own successes or failures.

There are private businesses that run very successfully as franchises. Successful national corporations with franchises have stiff standards and strong internal controls for franchisees. Political parties based on volunteers are incapable of instituting such controls, at least without repelling so many volunteers that they wither and die. Without stiff standards to guarantee quality, the franchise model does not work for fast food chains or for the marketplace of ideas.

Under Membership Recruitment, local membership and income are largely independent of local performance. Indeed, under this strategy local income is an undesirable side effect. Party income is supposed to go to the national Party to support membership recruitment, and not be diverted to local campaigns and local activities. Local political campaigns that try to win are a diversion of scarce resources from critical projects.

Under Membership Recruitment, local groups no longer have the invisible hand of the intellectual marketplace on their tillers. They are under no pressure that moves them to perform right deeds. Eventually they go irretrievably astray.

Our principles clearly predict the negative consequences of pooling all our resources in one national organization. Under Membership Recruitment, party income is concentrated in the hands of a single Washington headquarters. A single small group of people---no matter how chosen---decide how to spend the bulk of Libertarian financial resources from coast to coast. In any group under centralized control, the people at the center see most clearly their own needs, and see far less clearly the needs of the people in the field. This is not incompetence or corruption; it's simply how human vision works.

Centralization of spending on administrative apparatus is immediately understood by anyone associated with a university campus: the Administrators have the best-appointed buildings, the largest offices, and the most staff support. The faculty, the people who actually teach students and do research, go to the rear of the line when money is distributed. Libertarians will recognize how centralization of spending is related to Libertarian principles:

Central fiscal control is one more reason why central plan-

ning can't compete with entrepreneurs and a free market.

Membership Recruitment thus stifles competition in the marketplace of ideas, except in the narrow sense that Membership Recruitment as a strategy is in competition with other more effective strategies. Focussing resources into the National Party reduces resources available in the states for the candidates, election campaigns, and local groups that actually do the Libertarian Party's work.

In contrast, Local Organization creates competition between Libertarians in the marketplace of ideas. Local organizations choose which activities they will perform, and which activities they promise to perform if they get the needed resources from their supporters. Individual Libertarians choose which activities they will support, based on the appeal of the promises and the track records of the groups making the proposals. As a structure within which to work, Local Organization is entirely consistent with Libertarian principles. Local Organization uses the invisible hand of the intellectual marketplace to improve our programs.

From the standpoint of marketplace competition, Moral Armament is a type of local organization. Instead of investing in political groups to promote Separation of School and State, supporters of Moral Armament invest in private and home schooling and in tools making home and private schooling more effective. When everyone sees that private schools and home schooling are superior to state schools, school and state will separate. The coming success of Libertarian ideas demands the development of strong private civic structures to replace ineffective government civic structures, in education, charity, and other arenas. It is entirely appropriate for Libertarian supporters of every political strategy to invest in Moral Armament.

In summary, the Local Organization strategy is highly consistent with Libertarian Principles. Moral Armament is also consistent with Libertarian principles. In contrast, the Membership Recruitment strategy is not consistent with Libertarian principles. The inconsistencies between Membership Recruitment and Libertarian principles are basically the same as the inconsistencies between socialist state planning and Libertarian principles. Just as socialist planning does not work in the real world, Membership Recruitment---especially if it succeeds in creating a single national Libertarian Party controlling almost all Libertarian resources---guarantees its own long-term failure.

Issues of Substance

Issues of substance are the practical questions that constrain which strategies we can adopt. No matter our desires, the laws of nature and the principles of human nature say that some strategies are sure to fail. Issues of substance determine how successful our strategies are likely to be.

It is easy to forget that a political movement cannot assign its resources entirely as it sees fit. Some resources can be moved at will. Some can not. Some donors are only willing to invest in the excitement of a Presidential

campaign. Other donors don't want their money out of their sight, not even to their own county committee. Still others deeply prefer to trust political technicians to choose the best strategies for the party faithful.

A large part of Libertarian Party resources comes in the form of volunteers and volunteered time. Volunteer resources are only available for issues the volunteer cares about. You can make some progress expanding the notion of 'caring'. Some volunteers do care about the Party as a whole, not just their home town. Others understand the value of making a trade: "We'll help collect your signature-es if you'll help with ours." In large part, volunteers care about helping friends, people they know personally from their own town or county. Party leaders must remember that volunteers are there because they want to be there. If the Party leadership treats volunteers like employees on a 1940's assembly line, most volunteers will go away.

Even when a volunteer is willing to help, travel time limits where a volunteer can work. In 1999, when one of our own ran for State Representative in western Massachusetts, Libertarians from adjoining towns helped him get on the ballot. A few Libertarians came from further away. Except in the most extraordinary cases, such as the 1998 Illinois ballot access litigation, Libertarian volunteers simply can't get directly involved in Libertarian actions hundreds or thousands of miles from their homes.

We can talk about focusing our resources on interesting races and referenda, but many of our resources come with geographic tags limiting where they can be invested. A strategy that does not include activities in each tagged geographic area necessarily wastes those resources: volunteers, contacts, money. By giving volunteers something to do in their own home towns, the Local Organization strategy captures vast resources that would otherwise go to waste.

Local Organization also softens factional disputes. The Libertarian Party is subject to strains that other parties are not. Unlike the other two major parties, our Libertarian Party has principles. We are here to use electoral action to put specific policies into effect. We are not, however, centrally controlled. Libertarians expect to put their own libertarian ideas into effect, not to serve as mindless robots parroting the aphorisms of a Libertarian Central Committee. A natural consequence of our party's nature is that members routinely have strongly held ideas that do not agree with each other. Disagreements over policy issues, even on less important topics, can keep Libertarians from working together to Make Liberty Happen! via electoral victory.

How may complications from policy disputes be reduced? A non-hierarchical organization allows people who hold contradictory deeply-held views to support the Libertarian party without confronting each other. Even when they can't stand each other's company, people can agree not to sabotage each other's work. Local organization means Lib-

ertarians who disagree about policy can stay away from each other but still work to Make Liberty Happen!. In contrast, the unitary central organization of the Membership Recruitment strategy forces people who disagree into each other's arms, where policy disagreements lead to paralysis.

Local organization has other practical benefits for the party. In any given race, many people focus on a few top races. Voters who are rigidly attached to the Republican or Democratic parties are most likely to support their party at the top of the ticket. As they work down the ballot from Senator to State Representative through Alderman to Weigher of Coal, voters are more likely to respond to a person and not to her party tag. Furthermore, the smaller the district, the easier it is for a Libertarian candidate to press the flesh and meet a reasonable fraction of his voters. The lower the office, the more likely it is that people will respond to a Libertarian candidate's personal reputation rather than to abstract party loyalty. Libertarian opportunities for victory are thus typically higher in lower races.

[Having won those races, Libertarian winners are then obliged to show voters that all Libertarians are dedicated to doing their job while standing up for low taxes, private property, and all ten amendments of the Bill of Rights. If I am the Libertarian town dogcatcher, the way I perform my duties reflects for better or worse on the entire Libertarian Party.]

In summary, Local Organization captures and shepherds the volunteer resources that Membership Recruitment would lose. Local Organization neutralizes the internal ideological disputes that Membership Recruitment exacerbates. Local Organization encourages activists towards races we are likely to win in the near future, and away from races we are likely to lose. With respect to questions of substance, Local Organization is systematically better than Membership Recruitment. Moral Armament has essentially the same advantages that Local Organization has.

Practical Issues

Practical issues matter because sometimes people have flaws. They have bad judgement. They're lazy. They have hidden agendas no one would support--if they weren't hidden. Some people are simply crooked, motivated mostly by a desire to get their hands on our till. Practical issues include leadership, financial diversion, and ideological diversion.

Perhaps someday our leaders will all be saints and geniuses. I don't recommend holding your breath until that happens. In the meanwhile, we hope our leaders are flawless but arrange our affairs to minimize the damage that flawed people might do.

Practical Issue: Consequences of Leadership

The most important practical issue is leadership. The harm that a bad leader can inflict is almost limitless. A good leader at best provides a multiplier on available resources.

How do we protect ourselves from stupidity, against which the gods themselves struggle in vain? How can you tell if leadership is good or bad? You look at the record. You compare different people and groups. This is relatively easy with state and local organizations. You ask which state parties run candidates, and which talk about running candidates some other year. You ask which state groups support candidates, and which do successful fundraising but are flat broke when their candidates ask for aid. You ask which groups have made progress on several practical indices, and which groups have had electoral success. This comparison reveals which organizations are more effective, and which groups still need improvement. You can tell which policies are more effective and which should be recommended to our opponents.

At the national level, you can't make these comparisons. Right now, the libertarian movement has only one national Libertarian Party. That national Party follows at most one set of policies at a time. You can compare the success of those policies with promises made when the policies were adopted. However, until another policy goes into place, alternative policies offer promises, not results. Comparing the current policy's results with other policies' promises is comparing apples and oranges. Promises always sound better than real results.

Comparison thus cannot be used to test how well our national Party is doing. What then should we use as the yardstick of success? What then do we do? How do we protect ourselves against the reality that people sometimes make bad strategic decisions? Three approaches suggest themselves:

First, we could focus on state and local levels, so money and time go to groups whose performance can be tested. Comparison between states and localities will identify bad policies. Dividing our resources also limits the damage that can be done by bad leadership.

Second, we could emulate other major parties. If you look carefully, the Democrats and Republicans each have several national groups competing for resources. (Is competition wasteful and therefore bad? Well, you would think so if you were a Libertarian Socialist.)

Third, we can attempt careful, rigorous, open examination of policy options. Many Libertarians have no idea what strategic analysis is, let alone why strategic analysis is desirable, useful, or even possible. Public analysis by proponents and opponents of each strategy will identify points of disagreement, and establish track records for possible future leaders. Public analysis allows rational comparison of national and large-state state organizing efforts, an imperfect comparison that may be as good as we can get. Setting goals in advance is mandatory if you want to tell if a program has worked. 'Being consistently wrong in predictions' is a good indication of bad leadership, no matter how clever the rationalizations that are given after the fact of failure.

In summary, Local Organization supports comparison of strategies, and limits the damage done by bad strategic decisions. Membership Recruitment enfeebles the groups that the national Party might be compared with.

Membership Recruitment ensures that if the national organization drops the basket, almost all eggs will be in it. Moral Armament has most of the same advantages as Local Organization. The more money the Libertarian Party piles up in one place, the greater the temptation we present to the unscrupulous. The treasury of the local supper club might be a few hundred or a thousand dollars, enough to support an embezzler for a week. That money is mostly safe. If the local treasurer does dip into the till, local methods are often good enough to get the money back. The financial resources of the national Libertarian Party, now that it has placed most of the party's donations under its central control, are in the millions of dollars. Even a modest diversion from an income pool of this size is enough to provide gainful employment to a slew of consultants, all of whom will demonstrably conscientiously perform the tasks that thy contracted to perform.

I am not saying that we presently have a difficulty with embezzlement and fraud. I am saying that by concentrating our funds under a single roof we make ourselves a much more attractive target for embezzlers and nominal consultants. The consultants need not be dishonest. Consultants have the opportunity to recommend which projects we should pursue. If we invest heavily in useless projects that do little except generate income for consultants, contractors, and hangers-on, the Libertarian Party will be defeated. When much of our money passes through one choke point, a single group of well-paid incompetent could someday do great damage to the entire Libertarian Party from Key West to Point Barrow.

Practical Issue: Ideological Diversion

We are trying to create a Libertarian society, based on the assertion that the sum of freely-chosen individual beliefs will give the best arrangement of human society. In a centrally-run organization, the risk arises that the people in the center will try to turn the Libertarian Party in political directions that other Libertarians will think are not very Libertarian. No suspicion of malice need be implied. Any group of Libertarians always has the privilege of proposing new directions for the party, directions that their fellow Libertarians may or may not choose to support. However, when resources including mailing lists, newsletter editorships, and committee chairmanships are all under central control, the ability of a secret inner circle to divert the party in non-Libertarian directions is greatly enhanced.

In addition to malice-free bad decisions, a central Party is also subject to deliberate attack. If you have a unitary national or state Party with hundreds of thousands of members, millions of dollars in dues, and enormous mailing lists, you have created a temptation. Anyone with a political agenda and an adequate supply of supporters will see an opportunity to join our Party, take it over, and divert our Party to their ends. This is the Capture option, being used against us by some other party, rather than by us against another major party.

In summary, the Membership Recruitment Strategy

sends most of our resources to a single central office. In contrast, under Local Organization our resources are dispersed from coast to coast under the control of smaller group. Membership Recruitment maximizes the damage that can be done by bad policies, maximizes the temptation of illicit financial diversion, and simplifies the task of ideological diversion of our Party by our opponents. Local Organization and Moral Armament minimize the harm that bad policies can inflict, and shield the libertarian movement from financial and ideological diversions.

Making the Choice

On the level of principles, for a Libertarian there is no real competition between Membership Recruitment, Local Organization, and Moral Armament. There is no competition between party democratic centralism, party democracy, and a partyless party.

Our principles are just as true within our own party as they are in the wider world. Libertarian economic principles apply equally to the marketplace for coal and to the marketplace for ideas. Socialist democratic centralism is a wasteful and inefficient way to run a national coal industry. Similarly, Libertarian democratic centralism is a wasteful and inefficient way to run a national libertarian movement.

A Libertarian Party whose strategy is based primarily on a single strong national organization is a contradiction in terms. A national organization based on voluntary participation of its members is acceptable to Libertarians. However, if you believe that a strong national organization will be wiser and more effective than state and local groups, simply because it is larger and more 'national', you believe in democratic centralism.

How can you tell taxpayers that sending their money to Washington is bad for them, and then turn around and send the bulk of your donations to our Washington Headquarters? Libertarians reject state socialism in the commercial market. We should equally reject party socialism in the marketplace of ideas. The democratic centralist approach of the Membership Recruitment strategy is incompatible with Libertarian principles. The principled approach to Libertarian victory is the Local Organization strategy.

On the substantial level, we have been trying variants of the Membership Recruitment strategy for the past quarter-century. Our Presidential candidate did little better or worse in 1996 than in any of the four prior Presidential elections. The national Party has more members than it did once upon a time, but the national Party does little for local and state electoral success. In accord with current national Party support for the Membership Recruitment strategy, the national Party spends only a trace of its budget on local campaigns. In contrast, local organization efficiently captures all available resources. Local organization has put thousands of Libertarians on the ballot and hundreds into office while using a trace of the resources that the national