



# LIBERTY PLEDGE NEWSLETTER

APRIL  
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The Liberty Pledge Newsletter is a monthly publication for the participants in the National Libertarian Party Pledge program, and for Torch Club members. Because of your contributions we are able to carry on the daily activities of the Party, and we want you to know what we are doing. We also want the opportunity to thank you for your generosity, and let you know about others who are helping the Party as volunteers and contributors. So first, *thank you!*

301 West 21st Street • Houston, Texas 77008 • 713/880-1776

Dear Supporters of Liberty,

Well folks, National LP Headquarters has moved -- not to some distant island (complete with a bleached white beach), but just across Houston to an area known as "The Heights." The new address and phone number are in this issue's "Thank You" box.

The new Party HQ was until recently a private residence. One of the great things about being headquartered in Houston is that we didn't have to get an Act of Congress to locate in a residential neighborhood; there's no zoning here.

The move itself was the kind of stuff that adventures are made of. The weather was on our side --almost 80°, bright and sunny. Harris County's LP conjured up 21 energetic masochists, who rolled up their sleeves and worked like demons for nine hours. The local Chair, Sharon Freeman, was the only woman who participated and believe you me, she held her own with all the macho types. The National Staff was also huffing and puffing that day, in addition to trying to keep the move orderly.

The massive outpouring of local LP energy and cargo transport kept the cost of the move down to an incredibly low \$100. Not too shabby, if you ask me. These guys even sprang for their own beer! Heroes of the Revolution, all.

The new HQ is quite appealing, both inside and out. The house is about 25 years old and in very good shape, complete with porch swing, manicured lawn, and landscaping. Recent modifications have made it a hedonist's paradise with (in what was the master bedroom) a nitch in the wall for a large TV, an atrium, and a Jacuzzi. We have joked many times already about the luxury of having a Jacuzzi at our disposal, but we stay so darned busy around here that no one has had the time to use the thing -- not even on a weekend! But we keep hoping.

The living room has a wood-burning fireplace and there are hardwood floors throughout. The place came equipped with a refrigerator, so now we have two at our disposal (LP HQ already owned one). We've designated one for meat-eaters and one for vegetarians.

On a more serious note, there's also a sophisticated alarm system to protect the computer and other valuable resources owned by the LP.

## School dropout Perry Willis rallies to head the nation's 3rd largest political party

By KEN LANTERMAN  
Post Reporter

Some high school dropouts try to hide their lack of formal education from their employers, colleagues and friends as though it were an ugly wart.

Not Perry Willis.

Willis, who dropped out of high school with six months to go in his senior year, is actually proud of the fact.

"I wear it as a badge of honor," Willis says. "Government schools were interfering with my education, so I dropped out."

"Government schools" may be a strange way to refer to what everyone else calls public schools, and dropping out of school with only six months to go may seem foolish to most — but not Willis.

He is the new national executive director of the Libertarian Party. Headquartered in Houston, the party has 135,000 registered members, making it the third largest political organization in the United States. And Willis, at age 25, is the youngest executive director of a major national political party.

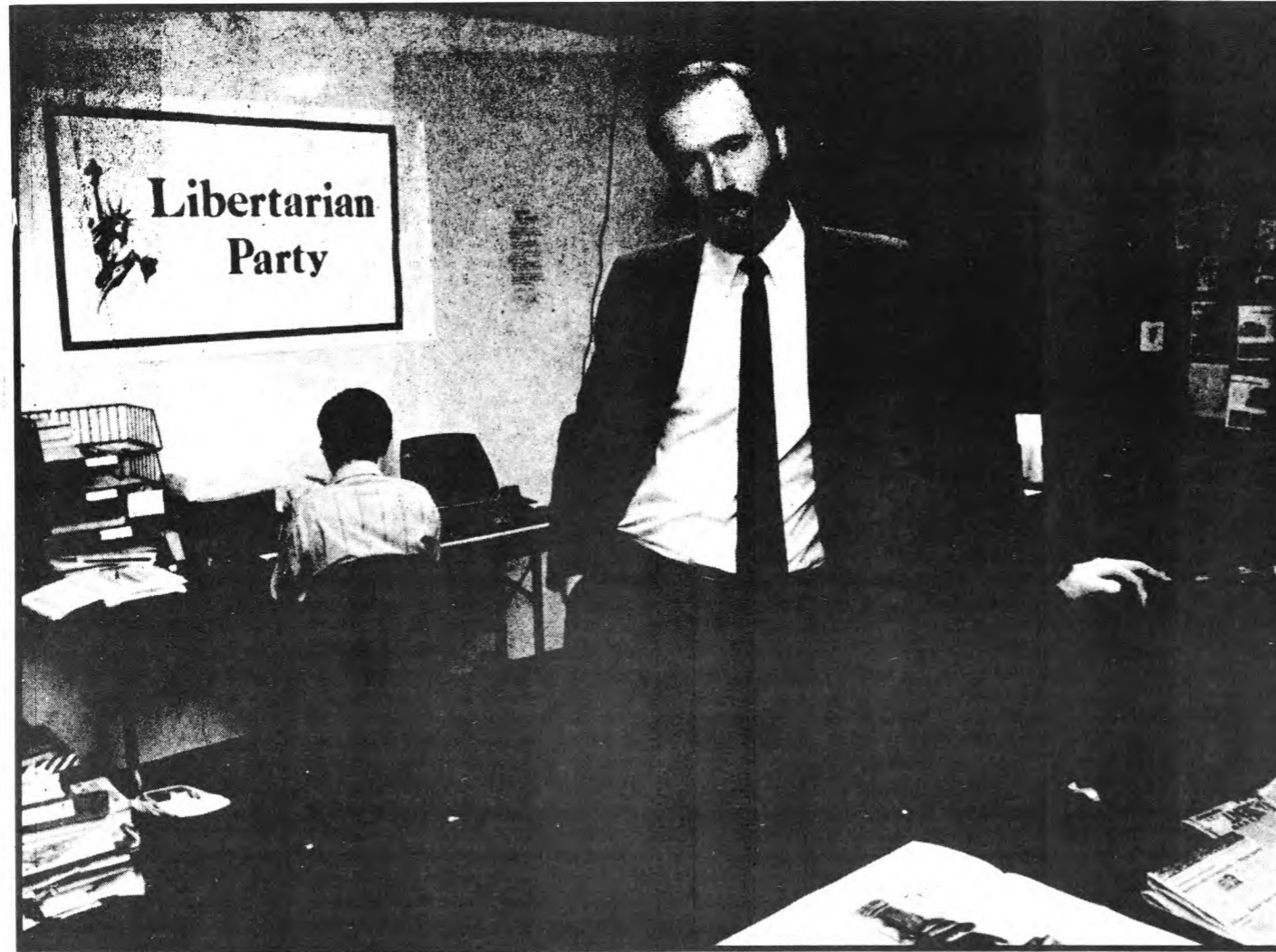
"Besides my height (he is 6 feet 7 inches) my age is the other thing that surprises people when we meet face-to-face," Willis says, smiling. "Taken together, it's kind of disarming."

Like most Libertarians, his outlook on life is, well, different.

Whereas many people believe that government is essentially good and plays an important role in our lives, Libertarians believe just the opposite. They believe, like Thomas Jefferson, that government that governs best, governs least — or if at all possible, not at all.

A native of San Antonio, Willis, then a high school student, moved to San Diego with his parents. Though he didn't discover libertarianism until he was 19, he feels he had all the makings of one when he was growing up. As a child, he was a fan of science fiction writer Robert Heinlein, whose stories are laced with the libertarian themes of rugged individualism and personal responsibility. He also hung out with what he calls "iconoclasts," folks who were skeptical of authority and weren't afraid to express their skepticism.

Throughout his early school years, he says he was the typically obedient student who looked upon



Post photo by Bruce Bennett

Perry Willis, of the Libertarian Party, at 25 is the youngest executive director of a major national political party.

his teachers as all-knowing creatures who could do no wrong.

"I was a straight-A student until I got into ninth grade," he says. "But then I quickly discovered that my teachers were so abysmal I decided I would do better to educate myself."

He says he came to the realization himself and wasn't influenced by anyone in particular. "It was all my own conjuring," he says. "Government schools and government teachers just weren't teaching me what I needed to know."

Willis was roundly criticized by everyone for taking this path, but he persisted. He developed his own reading list and study program, critically reading the biographies and works of Jefferson, Karl Marx, Adolf Hitler, H.L. Mencken and other political philosophers and leaders. He attended school only enough to get a passing grade.

Willis says he reads three books at a time. He is currently reading a book about Mencken, a chapter of the Bible each night and *Power and Market* by Murray Rothbard.

"I wasn't a bad student," he continues. "In fact, I was probably my teachers' favorite student because I always argued with them on points of philosophy, and I was

truly interested in the subjects they were teaching. They just weren't doing their job very well."

Eventually he decided to drop out of high school. "I also wanted to prove that a person could get any job they want as long as they have the skills an employer is looking for," Willis says. "I wanted to show formal education didn't matter."

His first job was as a clerk for a San Diego finance corporation. After a few short years and some job changes, he became a foreclosure agent for another finance corporation.

During this time, he also became active in politics, working for the Reagan for President campaign in 1980. Willis says Reagan's philosophy of limited government was the closest of any candidate to his own.

But during the latter stages of the campaign, Willis discovered another candidate who was calling for a government more limited in scope than Reagan: Libertarian Party candidate Ed Clark.

Willis decided Reagan was not his man. "Reagan basically did not question at all the socialistic changes that had occurred in American government in the 20th century," he says. "He accepted

it. He didn't want to rid us of government involvement in our lives. He just wanted less of it. Reagan didn't want fundamental change. Clark did."

Government, Willis and other Libertarians say, is essentially evil, no matter how good the intentions of those who run it. Therefore, government should be stripped to its bare essentials. More importantly, Libertarians also believe the use of force is illegitimate except in self defense or when the state is called upon to protect rights of individuals.

As a result most Libertarians are opposed to foreign intervention, the welfare state, regulation of business and industry, state-supported education, the draft, taxation — which they view as a form of theft — and laws outlawing drugs, pornography and prostitution. Ideally, the few government functions that have to exist would be paid for with voluntary contributions from citizens. In other words, the people get what they voluntarily pay for, not what they are forced to pay for.

Once Willis discovered there was an organization of like-minded individuals, he immediately became a member of the Libertarian Party and shortly thereafter be-

came active in the congressional campaign of Everett Hale of San Diego. Willis worked in various capacities on the campaign, but he seemed to be a natural fund raiser. In about six months with the campaign, he raised \$13,000 — practically unheard of for a Libertarian candidate in a congressional race.

His talents were recognized by the San Diego Libertarian Party, and after the election he was hired as the organization's executive director. Unmarried and with few obligations, Willis decided it was time to become a "full-time Libertarian" and quit his job with the finance company. Within seven months, he boosted the San Diego Libertarian Party's membership ranking in the state from eighth to second.

By the next year, 1984, he was working as finance director for the campaign of Dave Bergland, the party's presidential candidate.

Bergland received only 245,000 votes — less than one percent of the total — but he had a surplus in his financial war chest, which impressed party officials and led to their hiring of Willis as the California party's first finance director. Then during the party's national convention last summer, Willis

was hired to run its national headquarters in Houston.

(Houston was chosen as the site of the party's headquarters three years ago because it was viewed as the most libertarian-like, with its entrepreneurial spirit, lack of zoning and relatively low tax rates. The party's offices, located on the Katy Freeway, also house the headquarters for the Harris County Libertarian Party which is about 200 members strong.)

In the last few months, the Libertarian Party has lost some of the idealistic energy that drove it in its earlier years, Willis says. He blames that on Bergland's poor showing in 1984, the Reagan administration's adoption of some of his party's themes and the frustration that comes with being a third party in a two-party nation.

William Rusher, publisher of the *National Review*, a conservative digest of arts and politics, believes the Libertarian Party's platform is positioned too far from the center of the American political spectrum to be a viable political organization.

"I don't think they are looked upon as kooks," he says. "They are not irrational or hate mongers or anything like that. Their problem is they have a doctrine that is very anti-government, carried to an extreme that can't be justified."

He adds, "I'm always interested to read what they have to say, but I don't think they have much of a future as a political organization."

It will be Willis' job to see to it that people hear a lot about his party in the near future. He is excitedly preparing to promote the party through advertising and a strong public education campaign.

The Libertarian Party already has a few celebrities to call its own: Aaron Russo, producer of *Trading Places* and *Teachers*, talk-show perennial Orson Bean, and Karl Hess, former speech writer for Barry Goldwater.

The vast majority of its members, however, are said to be of the Baby Boom generation, which, through poll after poll, tends to express itself as socially permissive, economically conservative and isolationist in its foreign policy — positions which are at the core of the Libertarian Party.

Willis adds that a "peaceful revolution of ideas" is already under way and will soon sweep the nation. As evidence, he points to the growing interest in limited government exemplified by the popular support Reagan receives for many of his budget cutbacks, as well as the resounding defeat of 1984 Democratic presidential candidate Walter Mondale, who campaigned on a platform of more taxes and an increased role for the federal government.

"It's too late for the powers that be to stop it," he says. "Wait and see. Give us 20, 25 years. By the turn of the century, the Libertarian Party will be a major force in American politics."

## Libertarian Party is coming out of slump, national leader says

By Larry Peterson  
The Register

The Libertarian Party is coming out of the slump that relegated it to obscurity since the early 1980s, says Jim Turney, the party's national chairman.

Turney, in Southern California to talk to a libertarian group in Tustin and attend the state Libertarian Party convention in Los Angeles, offered upbeat projections about the party in an interview this week.

Nationwide, he said, the party plans to have as many as 400 candidates, the most since 1982, when it had 550. In California, he said, the party's major campaign will be on behalf of Norma Jean Almadorva of Los Angeles, who is running for the position of lieutenant governor.

The 15-year-old anti-government, anti-tax party made a big splash in 1978 when Ed Clark, its California gubernatorial candidate, received 5.5 percent of the vote. In 1980, Clark ran for president, polling about 1 percent of the vote nationwide.

Orange County residents have played a big role in the party.

David Bergland, of Costa Mesa, was national chairman for four years and was its presidential candidate in 1984. Several other county residents have been nominees for statewide posts, and Jack Dean of Fullerton is stepping down Sunday after two years as state chairman.

But since 1982, the party's fortunes have ebbed. Bergland received only 250,000 votes in 1984, and except for a seat in the Alaska Legislature, the Libertarians have managed to win only local offices — and only a few of those.

Turney conceded that interest has waned elsewhere and in Orange County, where the party's voter registration has dropped from nearly 2 percent of the total to about 1 percent in the past five years.

"Basically, we're in a rebuilding phase," the Richmond, Va., activist said. "In many areas, we've been functioning more like study groups and discussion clubs than a political party."

"It's been tough under the Reagan administration, because a lot of our ideas have found their way into policy, or least rhetoric of the administration. A lot of people who are generally sympathetic to our point of view have been lulled into thinking things are all right."

From the libertarian point of view, Turney insisted, things are anything but all right. Government spending, taxes, and American intervention abroad have continued to grow on many fronts, he said.

Turney cited studies suggesting there has been a political realignment favorable to libertarianism. Increasingly, he said, opinions no longer tend to cluster along traditional liberal and conservative lines.

For example, people tend to be conservative — or free-market oriented — on economic issues, but liberal — or individual-rights oriented — on social issues, Turney said. That is especially true, he argued, in the so-called "baby boom" generation now approaching age 40 and rapidly becoming the hub of the nation's political, social and economic activities.

The generation will become even more susceptible to the party's appeal when it learns there is no way the Social Security system will be able to maintain current levels of retirement income as baby boomers retire, Turney said.

You're probably thinking that we must have taken all your money and poured it down the tubes for mere comfort and visual appeal, so let me tell you the rest of the good news: This place leases for \$800 per month! Unbelievable! Our last HQ was going for \$2,200 per ... which means that, even allowing for utilities, we are realizing substantial savings every month. A good deal any way you look at it!

#### OUTREACH ISSUE LP NEWS!

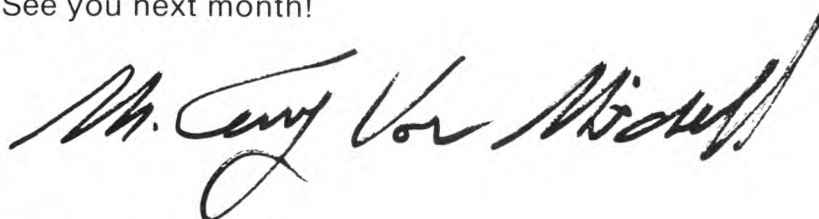
I'm sure that by now most of you have either heard about or have received a copy of the special Outreach Issue. If you haven't, the issue will focus on libertarian philosophy in general and tax issues in particular -- the perfect literature for handing out at this time of year. For those of you who are active with a local or state LP, extra copies are available. A nicely printed insert, advertising the presence of your local group would be a plus. The price is \$70.00 per thousand, and we request that you phone your orders in, so we can figure the postage fees right then.

I don't know what your opinions on the Outreach Issue are, but personally, I think that it may prove to be one of the most effective tools we've used so far. Especially if the local LP's use it to their best advantage.

In closing, I'd like to leave you with an excerpt from Atlas Shrugged that, although written roughly forty years ago, says it all, in regard to life in today's society.

**“There's no way to rule innocent men. The only power any government has is the power to crack down on criminals. Well, when there aren't enough criminals, one makes them. One declares so many things a crime that it becomes impossible for men to live without breaking laws. Who wants a nation of law-abiding citizens? ...But just pass the kind of laws that can neither be observed nor enforced nor objectively interpreted --and you create a nation of lawbreakers -- and then you cash in on the guilt ...”**

See you next month!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mr. Terry Von Mitchell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Terry Von Mitchell  
National Finance Director