

LIBERTY PLEDGE

newsletter

Libertarian National Committee, Inc. ♦ 2600 Virginia Ave, NW, Suite 100
Washington DC 20037 ♦ Phone: (202) 333-0008 ♦ Fax: (202) 333-0072

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Hugh Downs: Libertarians have all the "good ideas"

One of the country's most respected television newsmen says that America has become a "one-party country" — and that all the good political "ideas belong to the Libertarians."

Hugh Downs, co-host of the highly rated *20/20* news program, made those comments on the March 31st broadcast of *Politically Incorrect*, ABC-TV's sardonic, late-night look at current events.

The program, hosted by comedian Bill Maher, features a panel of four generally non-political guests who discuss a wide range of controversial topics. Downs appeared on the show with actor Jeffrey Tambor, Internet talk show host Judy Tenuta, and Traditional Values Coalition spokesperson Andrea Sheldon.

While the suggested theme of the March 31st show was the Heaven's Gate cult, a spirited four-way debate quickly developed about abortion, education, and politics.

When Tambor made a comment about the Republican Party, Downs retorted: "I think it might be important to point out that this country is a one-party country. Half of that party is called Republican and half is called Democrat. It doesn't make any difference. All the really good ideas belong to the Libertarians."

THE DISCUSSION RETURNED TO POLITICS again later when Andrea Sheldon tried to defend the Republican Party as the "party of freedom" because it abolished slavery.

Downs responded: "They always point back to the party of Lincoln — you know, as though Lincoln would be a Republican [today]. He wouldn't. He'd be a Libertarian."

Libertarian Party National Director Perry Willis said Downs' televised comments were part of a growing trend.

"First it was John Laroquette, then Clint Eastwood, and now comes Hugh Downs. I believe we'll see more and more of this kind of statement as we grow larger," he said.

Downs' *Politically Incorrect* comments were not the first time the newsmen criticized the LP's political opposition.

In a July 7, 1996 radio commentary, Downs said, "It's more difficult to tell a Republican from a Democrat than it is to tell a Tutsi from a Hutu."

And about the Libertarian Party, Downs said: "The Libertarian Party is the largest political party after the Republicans and Democrats. Elected Libertarians serve in offices all over the country. Every year, Libertarians gain more registered voters — defections from the two big parties. They also offer an alternative to the tired twosome."

State LP News Briefs

MAINE: The Maine LP has joined that state's Civil Liberties Union as plaintiffs in a lawsuit against the so-called "Clean Elections Act" — a new bill which drastically increases government funding and control of political campaigns.

The party's opposition to the bill is "based on First Amendment principles and the threat of further government intrusion into political activity," said Maine LP State Chair **Mark Cenci**. Despite the bill's clearly unconstitutional nature, Cenci said, "All the other politicians were scared to publicly defend principle on this important issue."

WEST VIRGINIA: A former vice chair of a GOP county party has defected to the Libertarian Party. **Richard Kerr**, formerly active in the Monongalia County Republican Party, has joined the LP because "if every Republican running for public office had been elected last year, changes would have been minuscule," reported the *Sunday Gazette-Mail* (Charleston, WV) on March 23rd.

Kerr — who has a vanity license plate that says "AMEND X" in reference to the 10th Amendment — says he "will work hard for the Libertarian principles."

WISCONSIN: An LP activist has been appointed to a special state government committee charged with reviewing the election process and making recommendations to the legislature.

Bob Collison, Chairman of the Metro Milwaukee LP, was appointed to the Joint Legislative Committee, which is examining ways to reverse the decline in voter participation.

"After listening to many ideas, I finally said the reason voter turnout was low was not the process — but the product the voters had to choose from," Collison reported.

CALIFORNIA: The State Supreme Court has agreed to hear a lawsuit filed by LP activist **Richard Rider**, which seeks to block a city-bond financed \$205 million expansion of the San Diego Convention Center. The case, *Rider vs San Diego*, "involves whether or not state laws should override city charter voter and taxpayer protections," said Rider — in this case, whether citizens must have an opportunity to vote on "lease-revenue bonds" issued by the city.

"The city should have put the issue before the voters in March of last year, as we requested," he said. "Win or lose, we have established the legitimacy of the issue."

Activist: My arrest violated free speech

By Tom Leithauer

OF THE SENTINEL STAFF

Hal Noyes was wearing a sign around his neck and passing out Libertarian Party leaflets in Orlando's Lake Eola Park when police told him to leave or face arrest.

Noyes of Orlando figured he was protected by the First Amendment. He was in a public park exercising his right to free speech and not bothering anybody, he said.

When he ignored officers' warnings, the 51-year-old computer programmer was charged with trespassing, handcuffed and taken to the Orange County Jail, where he spent seven hours.

Noyes contends the September 1995 arrest was unconstitutional. He filed a lawsuit this week in Orlando federal court seeking unspecified damages, he said, "for being treated like a common criminal."

"He wants enough monetary punishment to send a clear message" to city officials, Noyes' attorney, Steven Mason, said Wednesday.

City officials said they think the arrest was lawful.

"The officer felt justified in what he did at the scene," said Mark Munsey, the city's risk manager.

Noyes was arrested because he was in a part of the park that was supposed to be reserved for an anti-crime march organized by Crimeline, said Orlando police spokeswoman Sgt. Cheryl De-groff-Berry.

But federal courts take a dim view of any restrictions placed on political speech in public places. The U.S. Supreme Court requires governments to provide substantial justification for any interference with the right of free speech.

The charge against Noyes was dropped a month after the arrest because the Orange-Osceola State Attorney's Office decided that prosecution was unnecessary. According to notes in the case file, prosecutors thought the arrest was sufficient to remove Noyes from the park and penalize him.

Noyes said he thinks the police knew they wouldn't be able to prosecute him but arrested him so that he wouldn't disturb the event for Crimeline, which offers rewards to tipsters who help solve crimes.

The arrest was Noyes' first, he said, although he has been active since the 1960s in protesting and passing out leaflets.

The leaflets Noyes passed out in Lake Eola Park outlined the Libertarian Party position on crime — that it can be controlled without trampling on people's rights.

Noyes said he was standing off the sidewalk and politely offering the leaflets to passers-by.

Libertarians attract members to platform

Reflect alternative to mainstream parties

By Colin C. Haley

NEWS STAFF WRITER

MARLBOROUGH — As the line between the two major political parties blurs, leaders of the Libertarian Association of Massachusetts yesterday said their platform of smaller government, limited taxation and individual rights is attracting more voters than ever.

About 80 people from across the state attended the party's annual convention at the Best Western Hotel. In addition to discussing a range of topics, party members elected officers and mapped out strategy for the coming year.

"People are fed up with the whole government," said Carla Howell, who helped organize the event. "They've seen programs that aren't working and politicians that don't tell the truth."

At the beginning of last year, there were only 300 registered Libertarians in Massachusetts, Howell said. But thanks to a more active membership and voters disillusioned with the Republican and Democratic parties, that number jumped to 8,000.

The idea of a fiscally conservative, socially liberal party appeals to a lot of voters, Howell said. The problem, she said, is convincing them that casting ballots for Libertarians is not a waste.

"Every vote for the major parties is a vote that furthers their dominance and promotes business-as-usual," said Howell, a 41-year-old Wayland resident. "The only way we will

change things is to vote outside the system."

George Phillies of Worcester was a longtime Republican until joining the Libertarian party about 10 years ago. His switch was prompted by President Bush's conservative stances on abortion and censorship.

"The Republican Party walked out on me, not the other way around," said Phillies, a physicist at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

Phillies was the Libertarian choice for U.S. Senate this year but was unable to gain the necessary signatures to get on the ballot. He dismissed criticism that his party takes a radical stance on too many issues, such as the legalization of drugs.

"The war on drugs has caused more damage to society than drug use," Phillies said.

An example, he said is the ability for the federal and state government to seize property of alleged drug dealers. The action is a violation of civil liberties, Phillies said.

The 49-year-old also said the current tax system needs to be revamped. Major corporations should not receive lower tax rates than small-business owners, he said, noting a medical corporations' new deal with the city of Worcester.

Phillies said it is fitting the convention was held in Marlborough. "This is the only city in Massachusetts where (Libertarian presidential candidate) Harry Browne outpolled Ross Perot.

◀ *The Orlando Sentinel*

Orlando, Florida,
March 20, 1997

▶ *The Middlesex News*

Middlesex, Massachusetts,
February 16, 1997

▼ *The Orlando Sentinel*

Orlando, Florida,
March 22, 1997

Wise up about rights, Orlando

This is a great country.

You can speak your mind freely.

You can share your political beliefs openly.

Except one day at Orlando's Lake Eola Park.

On that day, a year and a half ago, an Orlando man committed the unreasonable act of trying to distribute Libertarian Party literature at the downtown-Orlando park.

A police officer who observed Hal Noyes "handing out fliers to people walking by" tried to stop that threat to public order by commanding the man to stop.

When Mr. Noyes wouldn't, he was charged with trespassing, handcuffed and taken to the Orange County Jail.

Reading Mr. Noyes' arrest report would be funny if it weren't so absurd.

Nothing indicates that Mr. Noyes was harassing anyone or creating any kind of disturbance, other than trying to pass out fliers to anyone interested. The pamphlets, by the way, spelled out the Libertarian position on criminal justice and crime control: incendiary stuff, such as "protect victims' rights" and "get tough on real crime."

The Orlando man even tried to explain to the officer that his actions were covered by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. That just seemed to confuse the officer

further, forcing him to seek help from a park ranger who also seemed unfamiliar with the right of free speech.

But it didn't stop there.

According to Mr. Noyes, when the officer was asked what authority prohibited the distribution of fliers, the policeman responded that Eola Park was "private property owned by the City of Orlando."

Gives new meaning to the words "public-private venture."

The city now is clinging to the defense that Mr. Noyes was in a part of the park reserved for an anti-crime march organized by Crimeline — as if the assembly of Crimeline supporters prevented the distribution of constitutionally protected literature.

No one contends that Mr. Noyes was acting in an unsafe or disruptive way, and the 51-year-old computer programmer says he even moved to the park's bandshell area after officers leading the march shooed him away. That's when he was arrested.

To no one's surprise, the charges against Mr. Noyes were dropped.

To no one's surprise, Mr. Noyes is seeking damages in federal court. He wants to send the city a clear message.

The message should be this: Read the U.S. Constitution.

Reasons to vote this package down are many

▼ *El Dorado News-Times*,
El Dorado, Arkansas,
March 18, 1997

Local resident elected to party leadership post

Rodney Wimberly has a new political office, and he said he hopes to use it to fulfill an old goal.

Wimberly was elected unanimously as vice chairman of the Libertarian Party of Arkansas on Saturday in a special business meeting at Little Rock.

The meeting was called because party chairman Robert Jones, of Fayetteville, moved out of state.

Former vice chairman Cliff Biedenharn, of Morrilton, was elected chairman and Wimberly was chosen vice chairman.

Both were elected to two-year terms. Wimberly said he was happy to be chosen for the office, and said he hopes to use his new post to guarantee ballot access.

"I hope to see that the Libertarian Party is on the ballot in Arkansas in the future," Wimberly said.

Biedenharn said the Arkansas Libertarian Party has tripled its membership since 1992, and continues to focus on membership growth. He said the party gives Arkansans "alternative viewpoints to those of established parties."

Suppose someone offered you a business deal in which you had to risk very little for the chance to earn millions. You would probably suspect it is too good to be true.

But it's not too good to be true for the owners of professional sports teams. Cities across the country compete to offer them precisely that kind of deal. It's also the offer Franklin County commissioners want voters to extend on May 6.

The commissioners want to increase the county sales tax 9 percent to fund a stadium and arena. They promise the project will revitalize Downtown, create jobs and attract professional sports and entertainment to Columbus. Like most politicians' promises, however, these scenarios are also too good to be true.

This tax is the rare one in which people from across the political spectrum are making exceptional arguments against it. A grass-roots coalition of people with often disparate views is working to defeat it. Voters

CON



HEATHER M. LOUGHLEY

Why is this tax a raw deal for the people of Franklin County? It's bad for the same reasons stadiums built with tax dollars have been financial failures for other cities.

Some people favor an arena but fear the numerous and dangerous flaws of this particular proposal. They point out that the taxpayers will be responsible for the inevitable construction overruns and likely operating deficits, while the tenants will bear none of these costs. Cost overruns have run into the hundreds of millions of dollars in other cities, including Cleveland.

With no signed leases in hand, the county will also be at a severe disadvantage in negotiating leases, because team owners will know the county has already committed your money to building a stadium.

Others in VAST oppose the stadium tax as the worst example of corporate welfare. They say tax dollars should be spent on pressing social concerns, such as funding schools and the Central Ohio Transit Authority. They also argue that a sales tax hits the poor hardest because they would pay a greater per-

centage of income on sales tax. I question the government's right to force everyone to pay a tax that will provide entertainment for a minority and earn profits for a few. Using the power to tax for a purpose as trivial as subsidizing professional sports is a severe misuse of power.

Voting to take your neighbors' money through a tax is a responsibility that should never be taken lightly. You may be able to afford the tax, but can your neighbor afford it?

And as with most government ventures, money spent on stadiums is as wasteful as money spent on \$600 Air Force toilet seats. Just look to the trash-burning power plant and the Santa Maria for examples of local government's financial savvy.

In a Heartland Institute study of subsidized stadiums, researchers said it is an "economic myth" that sports teams and stadiums create economic growth. In fact, the study concluded that tax subsidies to stadiums may actually have a *negative* effect on a city's economy.

If politicians really wanted to revitalize Downtown, they would repeal the many onerous laws and regulations that discourage development and growth. But giving up power is not nearly as attractive to a politician as the chance at photo opportunities with sports stars.

In a recent ABC-TV special titled *Free loaders*, tax-subsidized stadiums were featured as one of the worst examples of wealthy people earning millions on the backs of the rest of us, courtesy of the politicians.

On May 6, voters will be given the chance to reject higher taxes and corporate welfare.

Heather M. Loughley is a member of the Libertarian Party of Ohio's Central Region Executive Committee.

▲ *The Columbus Dispatch*
Columbus, Ohio,
March 16, 1997

▼ *The Courier-News*,
Elgin, Illinois,
March 3, 1997

Jack-booted thugs? Law-enforcement agents provide much ammo to critics

The *Courier-News* on Feb. 4 editorialized that the NRA was moving toward the fringe as evidenced by its fund-raising letter that called government law enforcement agents "jack-booted thugs." Law enforcement definitely has elements of jack-booted thuggery in its ranks, whether it's gun wars, drug wars or vitamin wars.

Are government law enforcement agents jack-booted thugs? Let me count the ways.

Women and children died in flames at the hands of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and the FBI at Waco, Texas, as the government rammed the Davidians' building with tanks while shooting CS gas (banned by international treaty) inside their home. Some government officials admit that CS gas dispersed indoors can be highly flammable. The agents also threw flash-bang grenades inside the Waco home. According to Col. Rex Applegate, one of the nation's foremost experts on riot control, "Any flash-bang will start fires."

Customs agents confiscated the \$113,000 that a Vietnamese mother had collected from 20 families in the Seattle area to take back to Vietnam for humanitarian relief.

Vicki Weaver was shot dead in cold blood, while holding her 10-month-old baby, by FBI marksman Lon Horiuchi at Ruby Ridge, Idaho. The previous day, agents had shot Vicki's 14-year-old son, Sammy, dead — in the back.

On Oct. 2, 1992, 61-year-old Donald Scott was shot dead in his home when 31 officers from eight law enforcement agencies smashed into his home unannounced. His wife screamed when she saw the intruders. Scott grabbed for his gun to protect his wife. And the raiders — who were equipped with automatic weapons, flash

KEN PRAZAK
Valley Views

jackets and a battering ram — shot him dead. Scott never pointed his gun at anybody. The motivation: He owned a 200-acre ranch in Malibu, Calif., adjacent to a national forest that the feds were coveting. A so-called "confidential informant" had said that Scott was growing marijuana plants on his property. (The informant denies making such a statement.) The agents could find no illicit drugs or plants anywhere on his 200-acre property. To add insult to murder, the IRS is trying to take the estate away from Scott's widow.

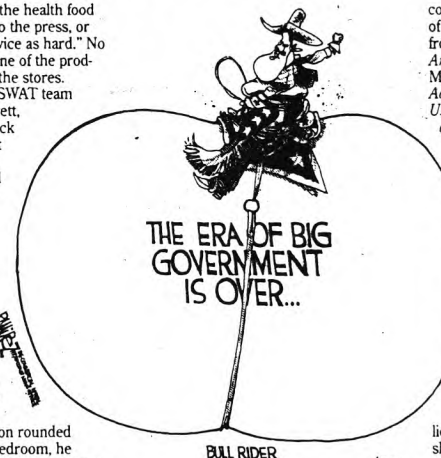
There is the case of Willie Jones, a hard-working gardener who paid cash for an airline ticket. Apparently, Jones fit a bad "profile." The cops confronted Jones and confiscated \$9,600 he was carrying for purchase of shrubbery for his landscaping business. Although the agents "arrested" his cash, Jones never was charged. He didn't have additional money to go to court to "prove his innocence." So law enforcement kept the money. Jones observed, "I didn't know it was against the law for a 42-year-old black man to have money in his pocket."

In 1992, the Food and Drug Administration, working behind the scenes, prompted the Texas Department of Health and Texas Department of Food and Drugs to undertake raids upon more than a dozen health food stores. More than 250 different products were forcibly seized from shelves — products such as aloe vera. Following a public outcry and restraining reactions from Texas politicians, the TDH

officers threatened one of the health food store owners, "Don't talk to the press, or we'll come down on you twice as hard." No charges were filed, and none of the products was ever returned to the stores.

In March 1992, a police SWAT team killed Robin Pratt, an Everett, Wash., mother in a no-knock raid carrying out an arrest warrant for her husband. Her husband was released later after the allegations upon which the arrest warrant were based turned out to be false. According to the *Seattle Times*, "Instead of using an apartment key given to them, SWAT members threw a 50-pound battering ram through a sliding-glass door that landed near the heads of Pratt's 6-year-old daughter and 5-year-old niece. As (policeman) Aston rounded the corner to the Pratts' bedroom, he encountered Robin Pratt. SWAT members were yelling, 'Get down,' and she started to crouch onto her knees. She looked up at Aston and said, 'Please don't hurt my children.' Aston had his gun pointed at her and fired, shooting her in the neck. According to one person, she was alive another one to two minutes. She was handcuffed, lying face down.

On Nov. 28, 1984, IRS agents raided the Englewood Learning Center, a day care center in the Detroit suburb of Allen Park, Mich., because of overdue taxes. The IRS agents forced parents to pay the center's taxes when they came to pick up their chil-



BULL RIDER

complete the list would require the length of a thick book. These examples come from *Lost Rights: The Destruction of American Liberty*, by James Bovard (St. Martin's Press), and *Anti-Constitutional Activities and Abuse of Police Power by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and other Federal Agencies*, by James DeMeo, Ph.D., director of research at Orgone Biophysical Research Laboratory, Ashland, Ore.

I fault the individual agents much less than I do the sanctioning of this activity by government. In fact, in some of these instances, the Supreme Court has placed its imprimatur. Fundamentally, though, the fault goes beyond government. It rests with opinion leaders such as *The Courier-News* editorial board who try to mitigate these activities by putting down the likes of the NRA for daring to challenge the jack-booted thugs.

And even more to the point, the fault lies with the complacent U.S. citizen who sleeps — sleeps while being preoccupied with the Super Bowl, O.J., and 90210; sleeps while the lives, fortunes and sacred honor of fellow U.S. citizens are being snuffed; sleeps while continuing to vote for more of the same from the Republicans and Democrats; sleeps while the last remnants of liberty and the Constitution end up shredded, lying in the trash heap of history.

Prazak, of East Dundee, is development director for the Libertarian Party of Illinois. Editor's note: As was indicated at the end of the editorial, that opinion was reprinted from the New York Times.

According to the *Washington Times*, "Inside were a handful of bewildered parents, unable even to see their children until they paid money for taxes they did not owe to two IRS agents sitting near the entrance. Allegedly, the children — as many as 30 of them — could not run to greet their parents, as ordinarily was their custom. IRS agents kept them closely guarded." Parents were not allowed to see their children until they signed an agreement with the IRS to pay up.

The preceding examples just scratch the surface of the extent of the problem. To



Libertarian sworn into office

Eggert to serve as justice of the peace in Bethlehem

By Kara Kenna
© 1997 Republican-American

BETHLEHEM

A local woman has become the town's first Libertarian justice of the peace.

MaryAnn Eggert of Arch Bridge Road was recently sworn into office. She was appointed to a four-year term by Secretary of the State Miles Rapoport. Bethlehem has 10 justices of the peace.

Eggert said she wanted to be a justice of the peace so she could become involved in public service and to support the Libertarian Party. Eggert also is the state's first Libertarian justice of the peace, said her husband and former first selectman, George Eggert.

The Libertarian Party, founded in 1971, has grown to become the third largest political party in the United States, according to a party fact sheet. Libertarians favor rolling back the size and cost of government and eliminating laws that control people's personal choices.

Recent changes in state law allow third-party members to be appointed to this position, said Mary Young, an attorney in the secretary of the state's office. She was unable to confirm if Eggert was the sole Libertarian justice of the peace in Connecticut.

As justice of the peace, MaryAnn Eggert can take acknowledgments, marry town residents, take depositions and issue subpoenas. When the state had a multi-tiered court system, she also would have been involved in the administration of the state's minor courts, George Eggert said. The office of the justice of the peace originated in England, he said.

MaryAnn Eggert, a retired supervising sergeant for the Litchfield County Court, used to be an unaffiliated voter before changing parties. "The Democratic and Republican parties are so much alike these days that you don't seem to have a choice," she said.

The Eggerts are organizing a Libertarian Town Committee. "We feel there are enough people interested," George Eggert said.

▲ *The Republican-American*, Waterbury, Connecticut, February 6, 1997

▼ *Private Eye Weekly*, Salt Lake City, Utah, January 1997

POLITICS

Church Approval

Libertarians strive for acceptance by LDS leaders and followers, alike.



Jim Dexter, state chairman of the Libertarian Party, challenges Mormons to think independently.

PHOTO: FRED HAYES

Jim Dexter tells a story about a nun and a drunk at heaven's doorstep. The nun, who'd been in a convent since childhood, had led a sinless life while the drunk had led a life of debauchery. On his deathbed, however, the drunk repented and was welcomed into heaven. The nun was sent to limbo.

Never having faced a hard choice, never having had to resist evil, the nun had demonstrated only that she could live sinless under force. Now, she was sent to prove she could do it of her own free will.

Sounding a bit like an arbiter of morality, Dexter says it's the kind of test most Utahns need to take. Breaking from their cultural bonds to prove they're as good as they appear. Exercising their freedom to choose, to make mistakes and—in the ultimate extrapolation—to become a Libertarian.

In a newly evolving political strategy, the Utah Libertarian Party is looking at religion to garner votes. Kind of a no-brainer in a state so predominantly

Mormon, where the last two election cycles have been lopsidedly Republican and LDS.

"When 80 percent of the population is LDS, one doesn't need any demographic

I would not encourage anybody to read pornography. But the purpose of liberty is to exercise responsibility, and you cannot if you have no opportunity to. God was so concerned about man having right, that the war in heaven went on. What we have in Utah is a total denial of agency.

—Jim Dexter

studies to know who you need to appeal to," says Dexter, state chairman of the Libertarian Party. That was a swipe at the Utah Democratic Party, which has been torn by research suggesting white, male Mormons may make the best candi-

dates to win the conservative majority.

This, however, is not the Democratic debate, which has escalated into an identity crisis of secessionist magnitude. Rather than re-create their party with a new LDS-ness, the Libertarians would like Mormons to re-evaluate their religious precepts with a Libertarian eye. In simple terms, they're looking for converts.

A recent edition of the Libertarian publication "The Liberator," Charles Hardy wrote an article entitled, "LDS 'Agency' Can Help You Recruit Mormons To Our Cause." Hardy maintains that Utah Mormons have misinterpreted culture as religion. "Generally, it is not LDS doctrine, but the Utah Mormon popular culture that is at odds with Libertarianism," he writes. At odds, because Utah culture is highly authoritarian while Libertarianism is just the opposite.

"We seem to represent a radical difference," says Dexter. "Actually, we think we represent their true beliefs." To bolster that contention, the Libertarians have started talking about The War In Heaven. You know, the one, in LDS doctrine, in which Jesus Christ and Lucifer vie for the right to lead mankind to the kingdom of God.

Let's see. Hardy cites no less than the Book of Revelations, Doctrine & Covenants, Pearl of Great Price and The Book of Mormon to demonstrate the Mormon belief that God's children would come to earth in a physical body and be tested before returning to heaven. "God knew His children would make mistakes [sin] while in mortality, and that the laws of eternal justice would prevent them

whether to live the laws of God. Lucifer wanted none of this choice business, and sought to force mankind to live right. "Heavenly Father pointed out that in order for people to progress, they had to be free to choose for themselves and reap the consequences of those decisions, that it was contrary to the nature of God to deny man his 'agency,'" Hardy writes.

The question, then, becomes how anyone can seek to deny another free choice, if free choice is God's will? In Utah, there are dozens of examples. For instance, Utah County officials want to remove pornography from the shelves of Movie Buffs.

"I would not encourage anybody to read pornography," says Dexter. "But the purpose of liberty is to exercise responsibility, and you cannot if you have no opportunity to. God was so concerned about man having right, that the war in heaven went on. What we have in Utah is a total denial of agency."

Just to clear up the first question anyone asks in Utah, Dexter is a non-Mormon import to Utah. Hardy is LDS. Both see the obvious validity in trying to bring Mormons around to their way of thinking. "We've got to learn more about the religion and the church's hierarchy to make an approach," Dexter says.

An approach not unlike that of the Democrats, who sent emissaries seeking a kind of seal of approval from the LDS Church. No one expects the church hierarchy to go back and politically redivide the wards again, but it would be one way of gaining membership in the minority parties, which are all but fading from view.

Unlike the Democrats, however, the Libertarians haven't slipped from grace. They were never there to begin with, although they did get enough votes in the November election to retain ballot status.

Like a developing country, though, the Libertarians want more than a little grain. They want the LDS Church to say it's OK to vote Libertarian. They want Gov. Mike Leavitt to say, yeah, this is the party that really believes in states' rights. They want to win an election. Any election.

"And that will happen right after we convince Gordon Hinckley that we are the party of the church," says Dexter. "Without an approval, we're not gonna get very far." ■

By KATHARINE BELE