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Goyette, Charles 3

Gravel, Mike 12

Hancock, Ernest 1, 3, 5

Harris, Sharon 19 (see 11)

Hess, Barry 12

Hornberger, Jacob 3, 15

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Kalafut, Bennett 6

Kielsky, Michael 11, 16

Korwin, Alan 13

Kubby, Steve 8

Nolan, David 1, 11

Phillies, George . . . 17 (see 11)

Renzulli, Mike 21 (see 11)

Ruwart, Mary 5, 15

Root, Wayne . . . 18, 20 (see 11)

Shoen, Mike 6, 12

Smith, Christine 11

Smith, L. Neil 1, 7

Suprynowicz, Vin 8, 9

Vallejo, Ed 4, 15

Van Cleave, Fran 10

Van Cleave, Kent 2, 14

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Courage Now

By Mike Dugger



As we approach the end of the tragedy commonly known as the Bush Administration, Libertarians must take stock of what it means to us as a political party. How have we conducted ourselves and our campaigns to counter the depredations of Bush's fascist juggernaut? How will we do so this year and in the future? I think the LP has failed miserably over the last eight years, but that doesn't mean we will continue to do so from here on out.

I prefer not to accentuate the negatives, but I think I would be remiss if I failed to at least briefly summarize them. I am writing in general terms and naturally many libertarians have avoided these errors over the years. Overall, however, I believe we have been guilty as charged.

Our first error was allowing ourselves to get caught up in the politics of fear after 9/11 and failing to energetically oppose the subsequent assaults upon our rights. Even if we couldn't prevent The Patriot Act, The Military Commissions Act, and other egregious legislation, we should have positioned the Party as the only one diametrically opposed to them.

This timidity led directly to our second error, failure to unite in determined opposition to Bush's illegal invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq. Some libertarians even supported these war crimes. The one thing any libertarian should know is that war is the health of the State and, absent a clear and credible threat to the country, it should always be opposed for that reason. Neither Osama bin Laden nor Saddam Hussein constituted a credible, immediate threat.

Finally, a similar lack of courage

SNAFU or PSYOPS? Why Does Government Bring Out the Worst in Us?

By Kent B. Van Cleave

Libertarians often find themselves scratching their heads in bewilderment as people fall for each new outrageous political boondoggle. How can people fail to wise up to the sloppy thinking that keeps them supporting Republicans and Democrats and all the disastrous laws and policies they promulgate? And, given that government is supposed to be in charge by virtue of some kind of expertise, knowledge, or other ability that makes its officials qualified to lead, direct, regulate, arrest, judge, and punish ... OK, stop laughing and get off the floor ... how could they fail to notice that they and their programs are bought by the

of convictions led to the gutting of the L.P. platform in 2006 and the present marginalization of the Party. But for the inertia of our ballot access, the L.P. would have ceased to exist by now. In other words, we are only here today because of the progress we made prior to 2001 and the fading momentum that progress has provided us. But we've nearly squandered it at this point and I doubt we can afford any more political cowardice.

The time has come for the Party to *boldly* go where it was founded to go, head-on in opposition to the Cult of the Omnipotent State. The best way we can begin this task is to restore the party platform to its pre-2006 state. In addition to putting teeth back into our opposition to the status quo, this will also mark a symbolic turn-around by the party to begin to correct the failures listed above.

From there, I propose three primary issues that the LPUS should make the focus of its efforts.

First and foremost, we don't need to attack or invade another country in yet another neocon war of aggression. Instead, we need to get our military out of the wars they're currently in, *starting* with Iraq and Afghanistan. Polls show that roughly 70% of Americans want us out of Iraq. We'd have to be stupid not to headline an issue that is not only consistent with our platform, but backed by over two-thirds of the electorate!

Second, we must advocate the repeal of all of legislation passed in the wake of 9/11 which violates our Constitution, including the Department of Homeland Security. To any thinking libertarian, these laws are nothing less than an attack by our own government intended to deprive Americans of their Constitutional rights, not to protect them from any credible threat to their well-being.

Finally, we must promise to investigate and prosecute those in office who have violated the highest law of the land, to commit war crimes and crimes against our rights as secured

public on the basis of well known psychological biases – "stinkin' thinkin'" you might say?

In other words, does government bring out the worst in us, psychologically speaking, because it screws that up like everything else ... or because that's how they get what they want? My plan here is to discuss some particular examples, then leave the reader to reach the verdict: incompetence or malice?

Let's begin with a juicy one: *groupthink*. That's the tendency for individuals to avoid thinking critically about groups to which they belong, and the closer one identifies with a particular group, the more likely one is to defend it against all opposing criticism, however compelling. Our so-called "Two-Party System" thrives on this one. Members of each party, to the extent they identify with it, refuse to even consider criticism from the opposing camp. Take the Iraq War:

in the first ten amendments to the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights. The most dangerous criminals are those who commit crimes under color of law. Therefore, we have little choice but to *fearlessly* identify those criminals and to pursue their punishment to the fullest extent of the law.

Of course there are many other issues that are important to libertarians, but these three are the ones I believe are the keys to turning the Party around and restoring it to its rightful position as the defender of individual rights from the depredations of the Cult of the Omnipotent State. Certainly the major parties have abandoned Americans on these issues. This presents us with the opportunity to take them up and use them to position ourselves as the not only the Party of Principle, but the Party of Peace and Individual Rights as well.

Will headlining the issues I advocate guarantee that the L.P. will capture the imagination of the electorate and suddenly ride a wave of electoral success? Of course not. It simply means that by doing so we *should* capture the imagination of the electorate and suddenly ride a wave of electoral success. Whether that actually happens will ultimately depend on how well we communicate the message, as well as whether or when Americans are ready to accept that message.

That's about as good as it's ever going to get for a third party seeking to overtake the entrenched parties of the established order. Eventually, if we position ourselves deftly on major issues consistent with our philosophy and platform, the other parties will drive the electorate right into our corner. The only remaining question is, how much more will they destroy in doing so?

Mike Dugger is the former Chair of the Arizona Libertarian Party from 1996-1998. He has recently been involved with End The War Now, a local coalition opposing the War on Iraq. He is also a contributing writer to FreedomsPhoenix.com and has his own web log at www.golffront.org/blog/

Remember how Republicans reacted when the Bush Administration's serial rationales for the war fell apart one by one? Right-wing talk shows went on and on about how Liberals were denying the existence of WMD's just because they hated Bush ... or, worse, because they hated America. (Come to think of it, *nationalism* may be about 70 percent groupthink.) Today, the typical Republican still believes there were WMD's, that Saddam was a threat to the U.S., that he was colluding with Al Qaida, and that our invasion would improve things for the Iraqi people, who desperately needed democracy.

Of course, Democrats are just as prone to groupthink. They mostly think of themselves as belonging to the fraternity of compassionate people, and think criticism of their policies goes beyond error, all the way to pathology.

Van Cleave Continued on Page 14