

www.samizdata.blogspot.com

LOSING, BLOGGING AND WINNING

BRIAN MICKLETHWAIT

www.samizdata.blogspot.com

A “blog”, or web log, is a pile of text on the internet. If a blog is not regularly replenished internetters will stop going to it, so if it is not to become unwieldy it must also have stuff regularly sliced off the bottom and archived. Because it’s on the internet, a blog can – must if it is to be popular – have links to other internet sites, and especially to other blogs. It also helps that blogs look pretty. Contributions to a blog don’t have to be of any set length, but they are usually quite short – i.e. a lot shorter than this. Often they are no more than a line and a link. (“Look at THIS.”)

If I knew enough about blogging to tell you all about how to do it, this would be a Tactical Note. I don’t, so this is a Personal Perspective. I write here not about what blogging means, merely about about what it means to me. And what blogging means to me is that it has recently administered to me a middle aged libertarian activist version of hormone replacement therapy.

FROM TWO-MAN TEAM TO CROWD

Over the Christmas of 2001, I had been doing some heartsearching about libertarianism. Is the Libertarian Alliance going anywhere? Am I going anywhere with it? That kind of thing.

During the eighties and early nineties, when Chris Tame and I were getting the Libertarian Alliance established – I with the publications and then with my last-Friday-of-the-month discussion evenings, he with pretty much everything else the LA was doing – we were it. But the LA has now sailed from the river of merely London-based libertarianism into the ocean of the internet. Although not the largest libertarian vessel it has proved itself seaworthy. By the mid-nineties Sean Gabb was emerging into active LA Junta membership, and into prominence as an internet-based libertarian pundit and activist, and more recently others have joined the Junta. We all get along fine. Sean and I have cooperated for years producing *Free Life*, with Sean in charge and me contributing with writings and with the photocopying. But there is something special about a two-man team. The very success of the LA seemed to have taken some of the fun out of it. So there I was last Christmas, feeling that whereas two had been company, now I was just one of the crowd. Doing LA publications suddenly felt like being on a treadmill. I seriously considered trying to extricate myself from the Libertarian Alliance and getting into teaching, or

paid writing, or something. Maybe I would take some of my own career advice and belatedly get myself one of those.¹

But then I thought some more and realised that there was no sense in me blaming anybody else. Instead of turning my back on libertarianism, I needed to get to know some *more* libertarians, and build myself a *new* network, rather than just mourning the changes that had happened to the previous one.

LIBERTARIAN SAMIZDATA

Some time during 2001, someone called Perry de Havilland started showing up at my last-Friday-of-the-month evenings, having heard about them from the internet. He subscribed to the Libertarian Alliance with above average generosity. We noted his distinctive surname, suggestive of airplanes, and – it must be admitted – money.

Perry was at first pre-occupied with family matters, but switched to active around November 2001. Through the Libertarian Alliance Forum,² the LA’s communal email operation, Perry had got to know Dale Amon, who has been a libertarian internetter for as long as I’ve been a libertarian. Dale had noticed blogging as soon as it started, and he told Perry about it. Maybe Perry de Havilland was born a blogger. Or maybe Dale Amon deserves most of the initial credit for “Libertarian Samizdata”.³ Maybe other friends of Perry’s – computer fluent Americans like Dale – told him about it. Whatever the story, and I hope he will tell his side of it one day, Perry hit the ground running. His Libertarian Samizdata blog is one of the better blogs out there of any orientation, and one of the very best libertarian ones.

While he was launching Samizdata, Perry was telling me that he and I should get together and have a meal and a natter. Other Libertarian Alliance writers and last-Fridayers like David Carr and Tom Burroughes, all unknown to me, were already writing for “the blog”. I had already done lots of my “jottings” for *Free Life*, which are writings in a similar vein. Brian ought to be a natural for the blog, they were telling each other, although I’m told they weren’t optimistic about convincing me of this. However, I had a couple of meals and fat-chewing sessions with Perry. He showed me Samizdata and I realised immediately that this was for me.

Tactically and strategically, Perry and I think like separated twins. I talk of world view or of attitude, he of “meta-context”, but it’s the same thing. We both agree that libertarianism is a state of mind, rather than just a list of policies. Both of us proclaim broad libertarian principles, and also try to popularise those principles, regarding the two processes as moving hand in hand.

We also come from similar social backgrounds and had similar educations. Our ancestors mostly had money and the trick of earning it and keeping hold of it, and both of us went to public schools. (On the phone Perry sounds alarmingly like one of my least favourite cousins.) Perry was a sportier boy than me, and his ancestors more mercantile than my more learnedly professional forbears. He tells of family business dramas, while I boast of relatives who were army and navy officers, clerics, doctors and lawyers, scientists and progressive reformers. At first I thought we might be another two-man team in the making, but in fact I have simply found another gang. I’m quite a senior member of it, what with my other libertarian battle honours, but essentially I’m just one of the Samizdatans, a contentedly junior member of the “blogosphere”.

LOSERS AND WINNERS

My mid-life-crisis worries about libertarianism, I now realise, concerned more than just the shifting personal dynamics of what is now the Libertarian Alliance gang – as opposed to two-man team. It was also bothering me that we London libertarians were, despite the internet and in some ways because of it, getting stuck in a rut, and what is more in a rut which was psychologically unappealing, and thus tactically and even strategically flawed.

The constant danger of libertarian propaganda is that it will become a propaganda of complaint, complaint, complaint.

Consider the Libertarian Alliance Forum, the thing which introduced Perry de Havilland to Dale Amon. My, yes, *complaint* about the Libertarian Alliance Forum is that it constantly veers towards negativity. If you doubt this, take a look at the headings

Personal Perspectives No. 17

ISSN 0267-7156 ISBN 1 85637 533 1

An occasional publication of the Libertarian Alliance,
25 Chapter Chambers, Esterbrooke Street, London SW1P 4NN
www.libertarian.co.uk email: admin@libertarian.co.uk

© 2002: Libertarian Alliance; Brian Micklethwait.

The views expressed in this publication are those of its author, and not necessarily those of the Libertarian Alliance, its Committee, Advisory Council or subscribers.

Director: Dr Chris R. Tame Editorial Director: Brian Micklethwait
Webmaster: Dr Sean Gabb

FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

attached to the postings. Here is a random sample, the first eight headings on my current LA-F email pile:

“Censorship State UK: Blair shies away from EU law on holocaust”

“Our giants are taller”

“The ‘anti-fascist’ final solution”

“Further evidence of the Utility of ID Cards”

“Surveillance State: DNA technique will trap criminals by their breath”

“Conspiracy Theory: Did US State Mail Anthrax?”

“Ezine: Reason Express – April 9, 2002”

“Death spirals on schedule”

As my fellow Samizdatan Tom Burroughes would say: Give me a break! Headings two and seven are okay, with heading two sounding quite upbeat. But mostly it’s misery. Note especially the presence of two examples of negative irony, bad news ironically labelled as good news, headings four and eight. On the face of it they’re good news. Something has “utility” and something else is “on schedule”. But here too the news is bad, and all the worse because the bad guys are saying that it’s good, their words and thought processes being the ones alluded to in the headings. ID cards don’t actually work, but are being bashed on with anyway by Surveillance States everywhere. And it’s “death spirals” which are on schedule, and that’s not good is it? At least Reason Express emerged on April 9th, and our giants are taller. (This last turns out to be a favourable reference to the Founding Fathers of the USA, so at least some of the news was good a couple of centuries ago.)

Now I’m not saying that the LA-F, or for that matter the libertarian movement generally (which is where most of these postings originated from), is incurably soaked in negativity. Nevertheless, negativity is a constant temptation to groups like the Libertarian Alliance, which deliberately place themselves off to the edge of respectable opinion. What we want is to be smart and effective and entertaining and persuasive. What we must constantly guard against is descending into paranoid weirdness.

What I’m talking about here are two opposite psychological and intellectual attitudes towards libertarianism, and what libertarianism is for: “loser libertarianism” and “winner libertarianism”.

Loser libertarianism says that the world is going to hell and that there’s nothing to be done about this. Loser libertarianism says: *I am not free*. My life is a failure, but it’s not my fault. My life *would* work fine, if only taxes weren’t so high, if only the Surveillance State wasn’t spying on me all the time, if only government regulations weren’t so crazy, if only the State wasn’t sending anthrax through the post and blaming it on Arabs and using that as an excuse to fight wars and put up taxes, if only bad people didn’t control the mass media and the schools and colleges and brainwash everybody, if only people in black helicopters weren’t selling my country to evil foreigners, if only, if only, if only.

Winner libertarianism is about how to make the world better, and how the world is, at least in some ways, actually getting better. Winner libertarianism explains how I can make my life a success. *I am free*. Yes, governments do bad things, as do others, but they can be confronted, resisted, criticised, and sometimes – quite often actually – defeated. They can also be got around or even made use of, if you choose something to do that the politicians are now not ruining, or perhaps even organising quite well, or if you learn better than others what the government is doing, good and bad.

To spot a loser libertarian, watch out for the phrase “so-called” (“so-called anti-fascist”, “so-called Politically Correct”, and so on), and in general watch out for inverted commas (so-called “anti-fascist”, etc.), used with a bitterly ironic sneer. Not only are loser libertarians not in control of their own lives, they are not even in control of their own language and their own thoughts. They repeatedly resort to the words of their enemies. The enemy – “of course”, “naturally”, “inevitably”, “needless to say” – controls the language, not me, the loser libertarian.

Winner libertarians have good things to say and say them well, and even if they have bad things to say they say them well also, and

with a bit of style. When winner libertarians encounter some enemy language getting in their way, they don’t just stick inverted commas on top of it but otherwise let it walk all over them. They rip it to pieces and re-assemble it so that they end up saying with their language exactly what they want to say. They invent phrases of their own for their loser enemies to worry about.

As libertarian activists, winner libertarians don’t beat themselves up over what they want to do but can’t do, they press on with what they want to do and can do.

The Libertarian Alliance Forum provides the London libertarian scene with an arena within which self-selected joiners-in can do just that, as of right, and prove to one another and to the rest of us that they have a voice worth listening to and the knack of putting that voice into writing. As I have already said, Libertarian Samizdata to some extent owes its very existence to the LA-F, and many more good things will, I’m sure, come of the LA-F and from the LA-F. But – and you could hear that “but” coming an inch and a half away, couldn’t you? – the LA-F suffers from a variant of Gresham’s law, with the bad and even abusive postings constantly threatening to drive away the good. Its virtue, that it is unedited for anything but the grossest of misbehaviour, is also its vice. When the LA-F gets bent out of shape by some unappealing tendency, the further tendency is that those who are not appealed to by the unappealing tendency in question just withdraw, leaving the unappealing tendency to become even more unappealing. In the long run I am optimistic that a team of LA-Fers will self-assemble who will have great exchanges with one another, and readers will assemble who, unlike me, have the trick of tuning in to what they like and screening out the rest, such as, in my case, loser libertarianism. But I don’t have this trick, maybe because I have insufficient internet experience. What I feel about the LA-F is, I’m sure, what many feel about the internet as a whole.

WINNERS CAN BE WRITERS

If winner libertarians aren’t appealed to by the Libertarian Alliance Forum, why can they not simply write longer pieces for the Libertarian Alliance, pieces like this one?

The problem with that is that writing even a quite short piece for the Libertarian Alliance, even a non-academic one such as this, is a huge labour. This is a truth I have been reluctant to acknowledge until now, because until now there was nothing that I was willing to do about it. I just flogged on with the publications, writing them, gouging them out of others, and letting them slowly accumulated. Meanwhile, there have been dozens of smart libertarians of my acquaintance who I knew were capable, intellectually speaking, of writing great stuff for the LA, but who were too busy with their lives ever to actually do it. Even a short piece, if combined with a job, would take a minimum of several days, and realistically such a thing actually takes several weeks, what with the other things that people with lives like to do with their spare time.

Blogging is different. Blogging gives winner libertarians the opportunity to write, because blogging can be combined with having a life. You can bash out a good contribution to a blog in under an hour. The difference between a few paragraphs every few days, and a quite large clutch of densely argued pages every few weeks, months or years, is all the difference. Blogging enables libertarians whose everyday lives work well to be libertarian writers, not just contributors to libertarianism with their cash and with their conversational support over the occasional dinner.

Winner libertarians have jobs they do well and career ladders they are making headway up, families which they are happy about and proud of, other happy hobbies which they refuse to abandon, other intellectual and artistic interests which give colour to their lives and thoughts and feelings. Blogging allows them to share both their libertarianism and the rest of this good stuff, with no sharp line drawn between the two, with the libertarian movement as a whole and with people generally. Blogging has thus shifted the voice of libertarianism away from obsessional libertarianism – libertarianism because nothing else is working, loser libertarianism – to the winning variety. All the blogs that I visit regularly have this positive feel about them. They are all a pleasure to read, however bad some of the news may be.

“THE TRIUMPH OF CAPITALISM”

Samizdatans in particular tend to be positive about life and in particular about the products of capitalism. (This has long been a theme of my *Free Life* jottings.⁴) Dale Amon, for instance, recently did a posting on Libertarian Samizdata which I especially liked. It was about the prospect of celebrities taking up the offer of free enterprise space tourism, of the sort so frowned on by state bureaucracies like NASA, but now starting to be made available by rival spacepersons, notably Russian ones.⁵ The positive message was twofold. First, isn't it great what great stuff the competitive free market is now supplying? Space tourism! How fabulous is that? And second, when space tourism gets going, think of the surge of libertarian memes this will send out into the culture, with celebrities deciding by the dozen that a quick orbit round the earth is this year's must-have purchase. It will be hard to reconcile stories like that with “concern for the environment”, incompetent disaster relief, and with the general soft-leftism that now dominates in celeb-land.

Tom Burroughes did a posting about some automatic beer glasses that tell the waitresses when they're empty.⁶ And I still remember fondly a posting I did about a kind of genetically engineered mouthwash that banishes tooth decay for your whole life.⁷

And, as if to make my point for me, on the exact day when I finished the first draft of this piece, what does Perry de Havilland himself put on Samizdata? A post entitled “The triumph of capitalism”! If that was on the LA-F, you'd fear an attack of ironic-sneer bad news. But Perry means it. Here it is:

I was having dinner last night in a Polish restaurant with an old chum of mine and a most delectable young lady, when I noticed something that reaffirmed my conviction that the triumph of global capitalism is completely unstoppable. If there was ever any doubt in your mind about how capitalist innovation makes our lives so much better, it can be dispelled by purchasing a bottle of Polish Zywiec beer and examining the label on the back of the bottle closely.

“Refrigerate, wait until Zywiec logo appears. That indicates ideal drinking temperature.”

Science and business join hands to deliver the perfect bottle of beer! God bless capitalism!⁸

The Zywiec logo follows.

There then follows another posting (i.e. a posting done just before the one about the Polish beer bottles), also by Perry, about the rights and wrongs – mostly the wrongs – of local, national (both British and American) and European politics. On its own, or accompanied only by similarly depressing stuff about other governmental misdeeds, this posting might only depress. But Perry isn't letting negativity take control. Give the free market constant credit. Don't just moan about politics. Take time out to have dinners in Polish restaurants with delectable friends.

The libertarian propaganda point (beyond the non-triviality of us not being lifeless maniacs who should get out more) is: what if the stuff now taken charge of by politicians – health, safety, “community”, defence, etc. – was done as well as those automatic Polish beer bottles? Which we can't say unless we keep on about the Polish beer bottles, and about all the other wonderful stuff that freedom and the free market magics into existence, in symbiotic harmony with the wondrously progressive technology that the free market stimulates and, when it's done right, so lavishly rewards.

As the first in time and second in line of these two Perry postings show, the one about all those bad governments, Libertarian Samizdata contains its share of complaints, if not from Perry then mostly from David Carr. But David Carr writes with such over-the-top exuberance that no matter how grim his topic, he's clearly enjoying himself. There's always a “now I feel better” atmosphere about David's postings. They're not so much complaint as complaint therapy. David used to do stand-up comedy and he regularly contributes the written sit-down variety to Samizdata

A THOUSAND HITS A DAY

Which brings me to the greatest joy of blogging. Being a pleasure to read, the good blogs get a truly amazing number of readers.

The LA-F now has about a hundred members, the members being the only ones who can read it. The Libertarian Alliance website gets a few dozen hits per day, the best use of the LA website now probably being (according to the anecdote I get) by already committed members of the London libertarian scene wanting to read more of the stuff (what with bits of paper being so inconvenient), and by journalists and broadcasters looking for quotes and mouths for their shows. Researchers beginning their phone calls to the LA with “I was reading your piece on marriage laws by ...” are an increasing and welcome trend. But this is only guesswork. Most of the hits to the LA website may just be machine-like software packages checking if there's anything new.

Now I can't say what quality all the hits are for Libertarian Samizdata either (although Perry obviously has a much better feel for this that I do), but the quantity is way, way off the top of the page compared to the LA-F and the LA website. Libertarian Samizdata now gets about a *thousand hits per day*, and sometimes many more than that. This does wonders for the morale of all concerned. Having for years banged away writing and editing what I hope has been winning prose for the pre-internet Libertarian Alliance, and having got ever more tired of doing only that, blogging came to me as a whole new lease of libertarian life.

And what if you would have liked to write for Samizdata but weren't as lucky as me and weren't asked? What if you have your own stuff to say? Easy, start your own. Natalie Solent's solo blog⁹ was already in business when I began with Samizdata. Since then I have witnessed the birth of four more British libertarian blogs: the “Liberty Log” (run by the St Andrews University Freedom Club), “UK Transport” (a specialist blog run and written by Patrick Crozier), “Chris Cooper's Blog” (renamed “Blogsophical Investigations”), and “Freedom and Whisky” (a Scottish oriented blog written by long time LA supporter David Farrer, who is a classic example of a hitherto silent winner libertarian).¹⁰ There'll be many more.

THE FIXED QUANTITY OF WRITING FALLACY

After my first surge of excitement about blogging I wondered if I wasn't getting overenthusiastic. Is it really that good? Might blogging, as Tim Starr suggested in a posting on the LA-F, just be a stupid fad? And is the rest of the libertarian movement that bad? Well, yes and no, I'd say. Blogging is that good, but the rest of the libertarian movement is not that bad, partly because blogging makes better sense of the libertarian movement in general, just as it has made better sense of me.

In particular, far from being rolled over by the bloggers, my dear old Libertarian Alliance publications, now pretty much up on the internet in their entirety at the LA website, are having a whole new lease of life. For example, I recently returned from a holiday in the South of France to find that my friend Tim Evans, in a guest contribution to Samizdata, had recommended, among other LA pieces, a piece I did on road pricing which was published almost a decade ago. This caused Patrick Crozier of UK Transport to read it for the first time, and to say on UK Transport that he liked it too. All this with the appropriate links, straight to the piece itself.¹¹

As Perry has always insisted, libertarian blogs don't replace libertarian pamphlets, any more than the pamphlets replace libertarian books. On the contrary, the blogs flag up the pamphlets and the books. Samizdata regularly links to the LA and other libertarian websites. The LA stuff footnotes the books and, as here, refers back to the blogs. Soon there'll be books about, drawn from and pointing to the blogs.

Tim Starr is, in particular, wrong to suggest that, in any but the most trivial and temporary way, blogging is “diverting talent away” from other libertarian activities (like the LA-F), even if in the very short run he may be right. I think I detect here a variant of the fixed quantity of wealth fallacy, namely the fixed quantity of *writing* fallacy. The notion that there is a fixed amount of libertarian writing out there, and that the only question at issue is which libertarian forum or publication gets to publish it, is just plain wrong, as I hope this whole piece has thoroughly explained. On the contrary, new centres of editorial initiative immediately call forth writing most of which would otherwise not have been done at

all, and which stimulates further writing that will also be published elsewhere.

I've so far done about sixty bits for Libertarian Samizdata, in just over three months. One or two of these might eventually have appeared in other settings, perhaps as longer pieces for the Libertarian Alliance. But without Samizdata most of this stuff would never have been written at all, and because of Samizdata is now much *more* likely also to appear, tidied up and improved, somewhere else. So far I've only been able to write regularly in the form of Libertarian Alliance pieces, and for *Free Life*. Was it just me? Was I doomed never to be able to commit to other publications? It turns out that I just hadn't met the right editor.

THE IMPACT ON MAINSTREAM JOURNALISM

Aside from cheering me up, what impact will blogging have? I don't know all of the answers to that because no one does. I do know *that* blogging will have huge effects, because nothing as big as this has no effects. But I can only guess at what these will be.

Blogging is already having an impact on mainstream journalism, as is proved by the number of attacks on blogging by mainstream journalists – ego-indulgent waffle being the basic charge. Although the fixed quantity of writing fallacy is plainly false, the fixed quantity of reading time fallacy – although also false – is a lot less completely false. One effect of blogging is to divert readers from the mainstream media.

But the influence is far more pervasive than that. The mainstream media in the western world are currently dominated by centre-leftist and not-so-centre-left opinions and people. A loser libertarian would be bitterly ironic about this and hint at massive conspiracies, but personally I don't find this scandalous. The universities were dominated by this stuff a generation ago, so now these people are the dominant journalistic voices. Nor do you need to get conspiratorial to explain that these people have preferred to hire like-minded subordinates and successors. Maybe part of this is deliberate, but in many cases, surely, they simply haven't known any better. How would these people know the difference between a smart libertarian writer and a dumb one, given that they're members of such completely different and unconnected intellectual and political networks? Besides which, insofar as all this is deliberate, well, what would you expect? People have beliefs about how the world works and should be made to work better. They want others to share these beliefs, and they want to share the jobs they control with a similarly disposed next generation. Thus the current state of the universities, and thus the current state of the media.

Blogging is going to impact seriously on all this, by identifying non-left and libertarian journalistic talent, giving it a start, training it, and then feeding it into the mainstream media. The blogosphere, most particularly in the person of Glenn Reynolds of Instapundit,¹² is always on the look-out for genuine journalistic scoops, and that means so are the rest of us. (Instapundit gets around 30,000 hits per day, and if it links to your blog your hit rate surges most agreeably.) This is where the next generation of media voices is going to come from. The second- and third-rate lefties who now make the running in the mainstream media are going to get a nasty shock when these first-rate shock-troups come up and at them, a quarter of a century younger, leaner, meaner and better informed about how the world works. Already, facing a suddenly empowered generation of non-left and libertarian outsider critics, the lefty mainstreamers are starting to look over their shoulders, uncomfortably aware that if they now write gibberish some damned blogger is liable to point this out, to the whole world, convincingly, amusingly, even career-threateningly. This didn't used to be the way it worked, but it is now.

Above all, there are all the things that the readers of the blogs will end up doing with their lives. Think about that.

BLOGGING TURNS HELL INTO HEAVEN

I could end by writing about how blogging was kick-started into action by the horror of 9/11 and the way that thousands of people had things they wanted to say about that, and I could ruminate upon the foreign policy battles that have raged between isolationist libertarians and their critics. But I'll leave that to others. Read the blogs. (Read Perry de Havilland on Samizdata.)

No, I want to end this Personal Perspective with something more personal. Not long ago, while I was away on that South of France holiday, staying with the family of my ten-year-old god-daughter, there was a Flamenco dancing show within walking distance. My god-daughter wanted to go and I escorted her.

It began with a singer, singing far too loudly into a sound system that was turned up far too high and which we were sitting far too near. It was frightful. The guitar player, who looked like a lefty philosophy professor and maybe was, was okay. Nevertheless, flamenco, like pop music of the soul persuasion, is a claim on my emotions that makes me want to clam up. If I want my soul stirred I call in Beethoven, not Mariah Carey or a flamenco singer.

Only one thing saved me from half an hour of pure hell. Instead of being tortured by the singing, I was able instead to amuse myself by crafting insults in my mind to describe it. In my mind, I started to blog. Who did this fat singer remind me of? I knew it was someone. Got it! He looked and sounded exactly like the late John Belushi doing a grotesque send-up of flamenco singing.

Matters did improve. Further unsatisfactory looking men with peculiar instruments appeared on the stage, but the good news was that a couple of gorgeous women — one just young enough still to be gorgeous, and the other just old enough to have just become gorgeous — started taking it turns to dance, and they were so gorgeous as to make the show almost endurable. I amused myself further by imagining what these gorgeous women were communicating to the mostly rather elderly audience with their dance moves:

"You pathetic people. We spend more having our armpits shaved than you spend on your cars."

"I won't always be doing this. I'm going to be a mad-but-gorgeous woman in Almodovar's next movie. Since I am a mad-but-gorgeous woman, I'll be brilliant. You won't catch me in crappy village halls like yours after that. Enjoy this while it lasts."

"Are you man enough to have me? None of these nerds are. Could your political career stand the scandal? How about if we both slept with you? Would that be worth all the hassle? It might, you know, it just might." [These last signals beamed at the local mayor rather than me. I know my limitations. Although, France being France, such "hassle" would probably be a political plus.]

John Belushi continued bellowing, but at least there were no pseudo-matadors waving castanets doing any of the dancing, just the two gorgeous women. Eventually, as my later reveries show, I started to screen out the singing and to quite enjoy the thing. I never did write the show up on Samizdata, but the fact that I could was the difference between a slice of hell and a slice of something not unlike heaven. And now the Libertarian Alliance, with its slower reflexes and longer memory-spans, *has* enabled me to write it up, further proof that blogging feeds into rather than diverts from the libertarian enterprise in general.

I wonder what the other bloggers will make of this. I'm pretty sure that some of them at least will have things to say, even if it's only: hey, look at this.

NOTES

1. See my Personal Perspectives No. 13, *Helping People To Do Freedom*, Libertarian Alliance, London, 2000.
2. To learn more about or to subscribe to the Libertarian Alliance Forum, e-mail the moderator: mario@libertarian.co.uk
3. Libertarian Samizdata: www.samizdata.blogspot.com
4. See for example *Free Life* No. 26, December 1996, p. 29.
5. Libertarian Samizdata, April 19, 2002, "Stars in space".
6. Libertarian Samizdata, April 4, 2002, "Great moments in capitalism".
7. Libertarian Samizdata, February 24, 2002, "The joy of genetic engineering".
8. Libertarian Samizdata, May 1, 2002, "The triumph of capitalism".
9. Natalie Solent, <http://www.nataliesolent.blogspot.com>
10. Natalie Solent: www.nataliesolent.blogspot.com
The Liberty Log: www.blog.libertyclub.org.uk
UK Transport: www.uktransport.blogspot.com
Blogosophical Investigations: www.chris-cooper.blogspot.com
Freedom and Whisky: www.freedomandwhisky.blogspot.com
11. Economic Notes No. 49, *The Private Ownership of Public Space: The New Age of Rationally Priced Road Use*, Libertarian Alliance, 1993.
12. Instapundit: <http://www.instapundit.com>