

THE INDEPENDENT LIBERTARIAN PARTY:

AN IDEA WHOSE TIME HAS COME
(BEING AMONG OTHER THINGS,
A REPLY TO NIGEL MEEK)

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of the
Independent
Libertarian Party
will be held on
Saturday 1st of May 1999
from Noon till 5 o'clock p.m.

INTRODUCTION: GROUNDS FOR PESSIMISM ABOUT THE IMPACT OF LIBERTARIAN IDEAS

A long-running debate among Libertarians in the United Kingdom has been whether or not to organise a Libertarian Party. I suspect that a majority view since 1980 has been opposed to the formation of a Libertarian Party. Instead of this, the favoured libertarian strategy has been to advance the ideas through publishing such pamphlets as this one, and by engaging in a high-level debate with academics and "opinion formers". A crucial advantage of this approach is that it prevents disputes from degenerating into strife about what exactly a libertarian project ought to be (i.e. minimum state or anarcho-capitalism). The Libertarian Alliance (LA) can publish arguments from both perspectives, as well as pamphlets calling for compromises with existing welfare arrangements and pamphlets advocating a "year zero" approach. Such internal disagreements as these make the LA more interesting, especially to people who are interested in ideas rather than politics, but would probably be a major weakness in a political party.

One problem with the LA strategy, if it is to be considered the exclusive vehicle for libertarian proselytising in the UK, is that it isn't designed to reach a large number of people. Living as we do in a democracy, where even the most manipulative politicians keep one eye on public opinion, the LA could be regarded by "the political *élite*" as offering "The True Path" to economic prosperity, but it wouldn't matter. Sometimes there is a reason why a mistake is perpetuated which has little or nothing to do with anyone's ability to grasp facts.

A case example of how a simple error can acquire global significance is the decision to celebrate the beginning of the third millennium in 2000 AD instead of 2001 AD.¹ Privately anyone can be informed that, as there wasn't a year 0 A.D. between 1 B.C. and 1 A.D., therefore the year 1000 A.D. was the last year of the first millennium (otherwise a millennium would have 999 years). The second millennium therefore started in 1001 and so on. Arthur C. Clarke knew exactly what he was doing in giving his classic science fiction novel the title "2001". This may seem a trivial matter. Yet I have had to re-write these paragraphs because it is considered dogmatic to insist that a millennium should actually have a thousand years: the first case of censorship that I have ever experienced when writing for the LA.

Neither the British Government nor its Opposition will contemplate moving the proposed state celebrations to 2001, even though it would make completing the preparations for the Millennium Dome and the London Underground connections easier to complete on time. A decision was taken during John Major's premiership, the Opposition didn't make an issue at the time, so now the entire British political establishment is trapped into one of the most bizarre cock-ups in history. An initial error which can no longer be cor-

rected is not an exclusively British phenomenon. The highly politicised French General Staff in 1940 decided for no good military reason to ignore all the available evidence that a German armoured column could pass through the Ardennes. The evidence included French armoured columns which practised manoeuvres along the very routes chosen by the German forces, several books published by French, British and German officers describing the tactics involved, and the French intelligence services who are reported to have provided warnings of German tank movements in the Ardennes before the break-through at Sedan. Who says the Emperor's New Clothes was fiction? Truth is irrelevant to the politicians, face is everything. If the entire British political establishment is exposed to the public as being unable to work out the right year for a millennium, several years after the decision was taken, the consequences would be unbearable to the individuals concerned. I give this as an example where there is no particular ideological agenda. It can't possibly be a matter of political importance whether the correct year for the new millennium was 2000 A.D., 2001 A.D. or any other particular year. We can only imagine the inertia that would exist if billions of pounds rested on the issue. This is why a LA pamphlet which logically demolishes the case for the existing arrangements for the National Health Service is laudable, but won't create a momentum for change without other factors coming into consideration. Telling the truth isn't good enough for winning an argument. If vested interests were purely a matter of money then economic arguments could be expected to prevail over time, if only by default.

What the examples of the millennium and French military incompetence in 1940 show is that superior knowledge is no guarantee of success. Faced with this realisation that the inertia of the present is great, it is hardly surprising that five of the LA's top writers have become almost incurable pessimists. Quite simply, if the LA is the only realistic hope for the spreading of libertarian ideas, then God help us. And all five pessimists are atheists.

I agree with the pessimists about the limits of the LA's potential for success as the solo voice of Liberty. But I am optimistic nonetheless. There is no contradiction in this view. I am simply of the opinion that libertarian ideas can be spread at different levels, to different audiences, by different means, with different degrees of consciousness. A single issue campaign, or a campaign which only agrees with part of the libertarian agenda can achieve a great deal.² It isn't necessary that someone agrees with libertarian ideas for that person to communicate them. A libertarian notion can be accidentally advocated by someone who has no interest in political ideas. In other words I disagree with the premise that the LA's strategy is a soloist's performance.

In this pamphlet I intend first to describe the emergence of the Independent Libertarian Party (ILP), then to rebut Nigel Meek's arguments put forward in a recent LA paper.³ Lack of space prevents me from developing here the aims and strategy of the ILP. I have dealt with this matter in some detail in the first ILP document to be published: *Founding the Independent Libertarian Party*.

BEYOND LEFT AND RIGHT: THE NEW POLITICS OF BRITAIN

In 1997 the Institute of Economic Affairs published a document called *Beyond Left and Right: The New Politics of Britain*.⁴ It carried a heavyweight authorship in John Blundell, the Director of the IEA, Brian Gosschalk, the Managing Director of the market research company MORI and was endorsed by Bob Worcester, the Chairman of MORI, who drafted the introduction. *Beyond Left and Right* was clearly a project that was considered by both the pollsters and by the think-tank as having some significance. A speculative "stocking-filler" to keep the IEA's publications catalogue ticking over would not have carried such endorsements. A number of broadsheet columnists were duly impressed, with the result that the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* published feature articles which raised the question as to whether the Conservative Party was capable of reclaiming a large slice of the "libertarian vote" which had been successfully mobilised by Mrs Thatcher.

In May 1998 I contested a local election in the London Borough of Camden as an "Independent Libertarian Party" candidate. In July

Tactical Notes No. 25

ISSN 0268-2923 ISBN 1 85637 456 4

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

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1998, Paul Marks and I founded the Independent Libertarian Party with Mr Marks being the acting Chairman and myself assuming the functions of acting General Secretary. At about this time an article appeared in *TANSTAAFL Times* — which I own and edit — describing the emergence of the ILP and referring to the IEA's polling. All of this took place in a context which would have been familiar to those who have been regular readers of *TANSTAAFL Times*, read some of my LA papers over the years and who attended two Putney Debates talks I gave in 1997 and in 1998.⁵

The more recent talk was entitled "The Trials and Tribulations of Publishing a Libertarian Newspaper". I developed this theme into a general discussion about "selling libertarianism". I started by asking the question: "Why didn't anyone else launch a libertarian newspaper like *TANSTAAFL Times*?" Having described the horrendous logistics of running a newspaper whilst working elsewhere, I turned to considering the opportunities that exist for libertarianism as a theme and of libertarians as a potential market. I used the IEA report to illustrate my talk by showing that MORI and the IEA had come up with a figure of 19% of the British public as "Libertarians". In my talk I discounted this figure as being open to debate. Having said this the figures generally were consistent with many outsiders' impressions of the "British character",⁶ especially given some of the questions asked in the survey. It was unfortunate that I did not immediately produce a published account of that meeting or that Nigel Meek was unable to attend either of the two talks.

ARE THERE 11 MILLION LIBERTARIANS IN THE UK?

In my analysis of the extent to which the British public was "libertarian" I started by considering the possible margin of error in the IEA report. If the figure of 19% were true, I suggested that about 11 million people in the UK were libertarians. If the figure were an exaggeration by a magnitude of 500 times (0.38% of the population), then there were 22,000 libertarians. I suggested that the true figure would undoubtedly lie somewhere in between. My next point was that if a figure in the hundreds of thousands were true, then there was clearly a major scope for the LA and other libertarian operations to expand. This meant that the LA tactics of the late 1980s and 1990s were probably too pessimistic in terms of looking to expand. The accuracy of my comments finds some confirmation in the recent fundraising efforts and the expansion of LA operations on the Internet, in re-launching the weekend conferences as well as the very successful Christmas Party, the appearance of *LA in the News* (a listing of all the LA's media coverage for 1998) and the appearance of an Annual Report for 1998 (which sets out what was achieved in 1998 and what is intended for 1999). Clearly, a market for libertarian ideas and products that has emerged in recent years.

My conclusion was that there is enough evidence to suggest that market research companies could identify "a libertarian market" which possesses *inter alia* the characteristics of being relatively well-educated, fairly affluent and typically not dependent on welfare housing. In addition to this, there is a section of the public which is undoubtedly not part of the Murray Rothbard fan club (they've lived fulfilling enough lives without ever having heard of the man),⁷ but which is likely to respond more enthusiastically to a message of "liberty" than one of "welfare". Not everyone buys a Volvo who can afford one. I'm sure that there are libertarians who own Volvos and there are collectivists who drive Ferraris.⁸ But the image of both cars is designed to appeal to a section of the public, not to all of it. In this respect, I predicted that a libertarian newspaper which managed to hit a few thousand in real circulation figures would become interesting to mainstream publishers. This would be a repeat of how the 1960s underground comics and magazines became mainstream in the 1970s. A libertarian editor has a chance of becoming the editor of something equivalent to *Four Four Two*, a football magazine which is basically a "fanzine" printed by a multinational corporation.⁹

If *TANSTAAFL Times* breaks out of its current circulation of 100 and hits a few thousand, the cost of advertising in it could be competitive with mainstream publishers. My advertising rates are already priced to make the cost comparable with a specialist magazine, based on a calculation of the cost of a full page advertisement divided by each thousand copies circulated. It would lit-

erally be cost effective for a major advertiser like Heinz or Ford to have advertisements placed in such a publication, if they were trying to target the population profile that closest fits the "libertarian market". The major disincentives for them are the unreliability of circulation figures (which is why I never inflate mine, see Axelrod¹⁰), the fact that large advertising agencies can't be bothered to spend £60 on an advertisement when their commission on a £25,000 one is obviously higher, and not least that it is assumed to be a lot easier to arrange the placing of an advertisement in the *Daily Mail* than in *TANSTAAFL Times*.

None of this analysis so far was connected with the emergence of a Libertarian Party in the UK. I added as an incidental point that a Libertarian Party would undoubtedly be a more viable proposition in 1998 than it would have been previously because of greater name recognition.

POLYCENTRISM: CREATE ONE, TWO, MANY LIBERTARIAN FRONTS!

I finished my talk on the opportunities for Libertarian projects by predicting that libertarian ideas would be spread by several organisations and activities, acting consciously or coincidentally, and that the combination of these activities would constitute a formidable momentum for Liberty. The organisations and activities include the LA, "fanzines" such as *TANSTAAFL Times* and *Free Life*, advertising campaigns which use libertarian imagery or themes, individual campaigns such as the drug anti-prohibitionists, commentators on the Internet and, somewhere in all this a political party which might hover between the impact of the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) and the threat of becoming the opposition to the New Labour Party. I would now call such a movement with many centres of activity, aimed at different goals and different levels of libertarian awareness as "polycentrism".

Without having at his disposal a full account of my arguments Nigel Meek wrote a vigorous attack on the idea that a British Libertarian Party ought to exist now.¹¹ His points are serious and deserve responding to. It is unfortunate that he didn't know at the time about my developed arguments or I am sure that Mr Meek would have produced a different analysis.

WHY THE US LIBERTARIAN PARTY IS NOT NECESSARILY A GUIDE FOR A BRITISH ONE

My response to Nigel Meek's paper should therefore begin by recognising that I share his pessimism about the existing British political parties' degree of libertarianism. I don't think that this contradicts anything claimed by *Beyond Left and Right*. My criticisms of Mr Meek's position as expressed in his paper are the following, regarding the shortcomings of the US Libertarian Party.

First, he doesn't consider whether the two mainstream parties are doing a good job of identifying libertarians and persuading them to vote Republican or Democrat. This seems especially relevant in "the Reagan years" (1980-1988).

Second, that the effect of Mr Ross Perot's election campaigns in 1992 and 1996 on a platform which overlapped that of the LP (explicitly attacking federal government waste, over-taxation and over-regulation) must have been to channel a lot of potential libertarian voters away from the LP.¹²

Third, that the US electoral system is actually a lot more hostile to a third party candidate than any other contested election system that I am acquainted with. For instance, many states require a candidate other than for the Republican or Democratic parties to fulfil extremely difficult criteria, such as collect tens of thousands of signatures and supply witnesses to counter a legal challenge to the authenticity of the signatures. In the State of Illinois in 1998 for instance, the LP was prevented from contesting local elections. This wasn't because the signatures hadn't been collected, but because the LP was unable to get enough witnesses to turn up in court and swear that enough of them were genuine in the face of objections made by Democrat and Republican party officials. The LP couldn't even retaliate by challenging the "Republicrats" (a term describing the two party alliance against independent candidates in the USA). Such practices in the UK could prevent any political party from running a concerted election campaign. In my

experience of British politics, if such an advantage had existed for the Tory and Liberal parties in 1900, there would not be a Labour Party. If such rules applied in the UK at this time, the Liberal Democrats could need over five and a quarter million signatures collected in a fortnight to field candidates for a General Election. In practice this would require many more signatures, so as to provide a cushion for successful Tory and Labour challenges. I stress that the Republican and Democratic candidates are automatically exempt from such regulations in the USA.

Fourth, that reasons for voting Republican in 1980 would surely have included “will lower taxes”, “will lower public spending”, “will cut the size of the federal government”.

Fifth, that the US Libertarian Party publicly supports other parties when they adopt part of the Libertarian agenda, such as when some Congressmen vote against a “War on Drugs” Bill or block an Internet censorship Bill. The LP regards part of its function to act as a pressure group against bigger government. This aspect of its role has never been publicly acknowledged by its libertarian critics.¹³

This particular point needs some elaboration: the misrepresentation of the LP’s strategy towards the other parties by its critics is particularly damaging to the reputation of the LP. Some of it is deliberate, but generally British critics of the LP tend to base their impressions on events of twenty years ago or more. It’s a bit like making judgments about the Tory or Labour parties based on the way they were when Ted Heath and Harold Wilson were running things.

There are two kinds of LP critics in the US. There are those who claim that the LP is impractical and those who demand the equivalent of the fall of Saigon immediately. The claim of the first group that the LP is intransigent towards libertarian leaning politicians in the Republican party is not true, though it may have been in the past. The “why-didn’t-you-abolish-the-state-yesterday?” club claims that the LP isn’t libertarian. Personally I regard this as a positive sign. At the last LP Convention in 1998, speakers from the Cato Institute attended and the LP’s Director praised Republican Congressman Ron Paul (despite his being a “defector” from the LP to the GOP). I doubt if either would have happened if the critics were accurate.

ARE THERE THREE MILLION LIBERTARIANS IN THE UK?

With regards to Mr Meek’s methodology for determining that the British political parties are not libertarian, I don’t have the data he used and I tend to agree with his conclusions. However, I note that “a simulation of interview” based on a political party’s manifesto and issues raised during election campaigns formed the basic evidence for Mr Meek. What this doesn’t tell us is why people voted for the party that they did. It’s not sufficient to show that page 92 of the Liberal Democrat Party’s manifesto said “X”. Given that voting for the Liberal Democrats is often a tactical or protest vote, and may be based on a misconception about the Liberal Democrats’ actual policies, trying to define the views of an electorate from the manifestos of the mainstream parties is at best a complicated affair. It strikes me that MORI’s research at least has the merit of including responses from some of the 29% of the electorate who didn’t vote at the last general election as well as from people who may not have registered to vote at all. These disenfranchised voters may not fit the conventional patterns of British politics. Technically 19% of the British electorate could be libertarians who simply refuse or fail to register to vote, or they could all be abstaining. Indeed the MORI figures found that 30% of the people it thought of as “libertarian” would not vote for one of the three main parties, a far higher proportion than for any of the other ideologies examined.¹⁴ This figure suggests that for all the problems with setting the right questions, MORI might have stumbled on some real libertarians. Accordingly I calculate that if only those “libertarians” as defined by MORI who wouldn’t vote for any mainstream party are real libertarians, we get a figure of between 3 to 3.5 millions. That’s a pretty good market for “Don’t Blame Me, I Didn’t Vote” T-shirts and other libertarian themes.

On the subject of what real libertarianism means I find Nigel Meek’s proposed list of policies ironic. His list consists of:

- The legalisation of all narcotic drugs.
- The privatisation of roads.
- The right of individuals to own any amount of guns.
- The disestablishment of the whole welfare state: the NHS, state education, state pensions, the lot.
- The privatisation of the police.
- The production of money to be denationalised.
- The right of individuals to hammer nails into the scrotums of other willing individuals.
- An end to the legal prohibition of the right to discriminate due to gender, race, sexuality or any other reason.

Mr Meek asks if “one fifth of the British public — or indeed any nation’s public — agrees with that genuinely libertarian agenda?”

If we allow for the fact that this is almost the ultimate list of extreme policies that Mr Meek could come up with, I rather fancy that one could find quite a good score in Switzerland for this list. After all there is evidence in the form of referendum results which have shown higher scores for total drug legalisation than 19%. There is a gun in every household (by law it is true, for certain age groups and it only applies to men). The last two policies are probably legal in Switzerland.

THE “PESSIMISTS’ FRINGE”

What amused me about Nigel Meek’s list was how revealing it was of the “pessimists’ fringe” of the LA: the people who can construct evidence to the effect that Liberty has been destroyed from any data whatsoever. My favourite example is of the two prominent LA writers who declared on the night of the 1987 election that because Mrs Thatcher had ruled out the privatisation of the Post Office that it was “the end of the road for privatisation”. How does this fit in with the New Labour government that is considering privatising the Post Office, the London Underground and several regiments of the British Army, to say nothing of everything that has been privatised since 1987.

The legalisation of all narcotic drugs may well be supported by a figure a lot nearer to the 19% “libertarian” electorate cited by MORI than to zero. Not all libertarians would in any case legalise all narcotic drugs in one go, completely, in the circumstances which prevail in the UK as I write. Speaking only for myself, I would suggest that a distinction between private and public property would make sense, that some thought should be given to drug related crime and that the reality of drug addiction requires some answers.

The disestablishment of the welfare state doesn’t need to be supported for it to be accepted as inevitable. A party which admits that the welfare state is doomed and proposes to dismantle it in a way which recognises the fears of those who depend on the welfare state or fear the disappearance of a “safety net” could well be libertarian, and it could well sway at least 19% of public opinion. Since I started writing this paper the Labour government has announced the privatisation of the management of most of the London Borough of Hackney’s schools and a discussion paper which considers the abolition of Housing Benefit. Not bad for what is by no means a libertarian party.

I have argued in a LA paper that the denationalisation of money would be insane at a time when inflation is low and the transaction costs of using a common currency in the UK (state owned it’s true) are lower than switching between private currencies might be.¹⁵

The right of people to hammer nails into another person’s scrotum may have been legalised in 1997 by the Tories! Following the embarrassment of the Operation Spanner affair, especially considering the cost of the investigation, the trial and the imprisonment of people who had consented to being assaulted by each other,¹⁶ there was a change in the law slipped into one of Mr Michael Howard’s populist crime Bills. Consent has been reinforced as a defence for actions involving adults. It is now unlikely that a similar case to Operation Spanner would end up in court without charges of rape, sexual assault where consent has not been given, or unless minors were involved. I can only go by anecdotal examples, but practically everyone I know who had an opinion about the Spanner case thought that imprisonment was wrong. Some people had serious doubts about the sanity of the defendants. I’m inclined to share

such an opinion of people who nail each other's scrotum. The only other question people had was whether the participants included minors, or adults who might have been coerced or unduly pressured into participation in sado-masochism. These are not illiberal concerns as I understand them.

WHO'S QUOTING DODGY STATISTICS THEN?

Nigel Meek's paper then makes claims about the "true" feelings of the British electorate. An example of this is the claim by the British Social Attitudes survey of 1997/98: 59.3% of respondents support "Increase taxes and spend more on health, education and social benefits whilst 3.9% want to see taxes and public spending cut. I have to say that taking this sort of survey as a counter to the IEA requires some nerve. It was the IEA which published rebuttals to "more public spending" surveys by quantifying the tax increases per person. I would also add that the evidence of every election where the Labour party has promised to massively outspend the Tories on health and education is revealing. Labour lost in 1979, 1983, 1987 and 1992. New Labour won in 1997 after promising to keep to Tory spending plans except for a workfare scheme which would be financed out of a "windfall tax". It's true that this promise hasn't been kept, although I doubt if the Tories wouldn't have overspent anyway and raised taxation or inflation. My point is that people are a lot more reluctant to vote for higher taxes in a secret ballot than they are to say to a stranger that they would like to live in a land where everything is free of charge.

Given Mr Meek's criticism of the IEA and MORI's methodology, I am awfully tempted by the view that he has used a set of statistics which he doesn't actually believe in.

CONCLUSION: IF AN IDEA IS HALF-BAKED, SHOULD WE THROW IT AWAY?

My final criticism of Mr Meek's paper is that one can take his conclusion and deduce the exact opposite course of action than he has done.

In the (regrettably distant) future there may well be a role — perhaps a necessity — for a British libertarian party in the same way that there was a role for the Labour Party in 1945 or the Conservative Party in 1979: as the political repository of the will of a sufficiently large number of *already-convinced* people. For whilst libertarianism must first win the battle in the marketplace of ideas, unless we follow the (undeniably noble) route of non-parliamentary voluntarism (e.g. *Voluntaryist*, 1998), it will require libertarian MPs — Libertarians or libertarian sympathisers in other parties — to repeal, in a sensible fashion that does not cause massive social chaos, already-existing non-libertarian laws and programmes. But that is a long time away. [author's emphasis]

It seems to me that this conclusion fits the case for starting a Libertarian Party today, in the hope that one day, many years hence, it will become a worthy challenger of the *status quo*. What the argument comes down to in the end is whether or not you have confidence in the future. If an idea is half-baked, do you throw it away as "uncooked", or do you put the cake back in the oven and see if it will work out? I finish with one last thought.

How did the Labour Party reach a position where it was able to contest the 1945 general election? The answer to this question is the defining one in the rationale for the founding of the Independent Libertarian Party.

POST-SCRIPT

"Founding the Independent Libertarian Party", a pamphlet produced by the ILP in April 1999, can be ordered via the LA. It contains details of the aims, objectives, criteria for success and failure, organisation and a proposed platform for the Party.

NOTES

1. Letter in the *Daily Telegraph* by Arthur C. Clarke (no relation).
2. Brian Micklethwait, *How the World is Now Encouraging the Spread of Libertarian Ideas*, Political Notes No. 150, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1998.
3. Nigel Meek, *The Libertarian Party of Great Britain: An Idea Whose Time Has NOT Come*, Tactical Notes No. 22, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1998.

4. John Blundell and Brian Gosschalk, *Beyond Left and Right: The New Politics of Britain*, Working Paper No.1, Institute of Economic Affairs, London, 1997.
5. The relevant LA papers I have written are: *The Micropolitics of Free Market Money: A Proposal*, Economic Notes No. 39, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1992; *Euroscepticism Is Not Libertarianism*, Foreign Policy Perspectives No. 24, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1994; *Rolling Back the State for Real: The Alternative Clarke Budget 1995*, Economic Notes No. 66, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1995; *The Case for Written Constitutions: Even Broken or Bad Promises are Better in Writing*, Legal Notes No. 24, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1996.

I have now given four LA talks at "The Putney Debates" which are relevant to this issue. One was in 1995 in which I predicted the collapse of the Tory Party. The second and third involved the arguments advanced in this paper. The talk in 1997 was a review of the general election of that year, in which I outlined the collapse of the Tory party at every level before and after the May 1997 election. The 1998 talk is described in this paper. I have given another talk in February 1999 on the subject of founding the ILP.

	US	UK
Conservative	35%	36%
Libertarian	20%	19%
Socialist	13%	18%
Authoritarian	20%	13%
Don't Know (US)	12%	
Centrist (UK)		15%
Total	100%	101%

- N.B. i) US surveys use "Populist" for "Authoritarian" and "Liberal" for "Socialist"; ii) 101% total is caused by rounding up percentages' margin of error.

There is a study to be carried out on the psychology of the various members of each category. It would be interesting to examine how an ideology can be influential without being widely supported. Foreigners to both countries have told me that they believe that the weight of each ideology is about right. I suspect that outsiders are the best judges in this comparison.

7. Murray Rothbard is the most overrated Libertarian writer I have come across. Some people compare him to Karl Marx for being the fountainhead of modern libertarian thought. Rothbard's attempts to find a libertarian heritage in every corner of world history leads to insane conclusions, not least that the IRA must be a fine organisation because there were "libertarians" in Ireland 1200 years ago.

Some of Rothbard's disciples are simply mad. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the Vietnam War (and there were more wrongs than rights), the notion that the fall of Saigon was "A Good Thing" because for about fifteen minutes there wasn't a state in the doomed city makes one wish that the Rothbardians concerned had experienced such delights at first hand.

On the subject of free banking, Rothbard's crime is to announce that private currencies are rational, whilst himself exclusively using "evil" U.S. Dollars, despite the existence of a private currency bank within a short drive from his home in Nevada.

8. P. J. O'Rourke's essay, "Ferrari Refutes the Decline of the West" from *The Republican Party Reptile*, Picador, London, 1987, quoted in Brian Micklethwait, *Ferrari Refutes the Decline of the West and So Do Classical Compact Discs: Some Reflections on Freedom, Materialism and the Winning of the Cold War*, Cultural Notes No. 20, Libertarian Alliance, London, 1990.
9. *Four Four Two* is published by Haymarket Publishing Ltd.

10. A lesson of Robert Axelrod's *The Evolution of Cooperation*, Basic Books, New York, 1984, is that "Nasty" strategies don't work in the long-term and that "enlarging the shadow of the future" is one way of stimulating co-operation.

In this instance, by obviously claiming an accurate circulation figure when it scarcely reaches three figures, I stand a reasonable chance of being believed when *TANSTAAFL Times'* circulation reaches 1,000 or 10,000. It is notorious that most political organisations inflate their memberships or circulation by a factor of ten (if unverifiable) or by double (even when figures can be verified to some extent).

Quite apart from the perceived pitfalls in sponsoring small political outfits, this reputation for dishonest circulation figures can only harm the commercial viability of political newspapers. For these reasons I oppose bogus or inflated membership/circulation figures.

11. Meek, *op. cit.*
12. For evidence of the Perot campaigns' diversion of effort away from the LP, see Jerry Pournelle's introduction to the 1992 edition of *Take Back Your Government!* by Robert A. Heinlein, copyright Mrs Virginia Heinlein, published by Baen Books, Riverdale, NY, 1992. I would imagine that many of the 432,297 people who voted LP in 1988 would have been impressed by the following call:

"To say that the American people have come to distrust their government is a silly understatement. The polls show that they hate our present political system. They're as mad as Hell and they aren't going to take it any more. There is a movement to take back control, and it may work. For the first time in our lifetimes there is an alternative. Millions of Americans, disgusted with politics as usual, have turned to a man who, as I write this, is still legally only an "undecided candidate for President"... (p. xiii, Introduction)

Indeed the LP vote fell to a mere 291,627 at the 1992 US Presidential election. More recent trends suggest that the Perot factor is slowing down the growth of the LP: in 1996 the LP scored its second highest vote ever (485,120) in a background of a shrinking turnout.

13. This is clearly shown by the LP's press releases, which often trigger articles in *TANSTAAFL Times*.
14. Those respondents in the IEA/MORI study who were intending to vote for another party than Conservative/Labour/Liberal Democrat, or not intending to vote, or who said that they didn't know were as follows: 22% of all conservatives, 30% of all libertarians, 19% of all socialists, 26% of all centrists, 20% of authoritarians.
15. *The Micropolitics of Free Market Money: A Proposal*, see Note 5 for details.
16. The best reports on the case were by Anthony Furlong in *Free Life* and for the LA, Dr Sean Gabb in *Free Life*, and for a light-hearted view, Auberon Waugh in *The Daily Telegraph*.