

News from somewhere

Lauri Rantala reports on libertarian events around the world

SOUTH PACIFIC

While the *Sunday Observer* of 11 May, 1980 described the New Hebrides as a 'tiny, impoverished republic grotesquely ill-prepared for independence,' which is to be granted July 30th of this year, at least one resident of these South Pacific islands found sufficient support to disagree vigorously enough to speed up the process. The end of May saw Mr Jimmy (where have I heard that politician's name before?) Stevens, backed by 800 plantation workers armed with bows and arrows as well as a cache of 60,000 kilos of dynamite (in case the going really got tough), take control of the island Espiritu Santo renaming it the Republic of Vemarana.

Both the British and French officials still running the affairs of the island had the audacity to be outraged, in spite of their poor treatment of the islanders. Much of the New Hebrides is backward, by anyone's standards, and attempts by residents of the island to move culturally and economically forward have been continually frustrated because residents of the islands are not officially citizens of either of the ruling powers and thus have not been granted passports by either the British or the French. Additionally, many natives have been barred from owning land. One of the few successful attempts to enculturate the natives has resulted in their curious adoption of the Duke of Edinburgh as God. But the islanders are not the only ones confused by the goings on in this remote corner of the globe. In analysing the events leading up to the revolt in this copra republic, astute London publications demonstrated their political wherewithal by describing the Libertarian Party of America, allegedly involved in the insurrection, as 'a curious mixture of the Right-wing advocacy of tax free, untrammelled capitalism, and fashionable liberal social reforms,' (*The Guardian*) and as 'an odd US political grouping.' (*The New Statesman*)

In fact, it is the Phoenix Foundation, unaffiliated with the L.P., which has given support and advice to the revolutionaries, and this was no maiden attempt at creating a tax-free society. One Mr Michael Oliver, of the Phoenix Foundation, has tried previously to set up a South Pacific tax-haven republic. His efforts were a dismal failure because the seaweed reef on which he planned to erect his paradise on earth vanished under water at high tide.

The revolt in the New Hebrides is a mixed bag for libertarians and we wait to see what Stevens' next move will be. One would hope, however, that the revolt may inspire others suffering under the yoke of imperialistic rule to 'Wash that State Right Out of My Hair'.

WE'RE IN THE MAJORS NOW

The Libertarian Party in America has come a long way since its inception in Dave Nolan's living room in 1971. In the upcoming Presidential election, Ed Clark, the man who siphoned off votes from both Governor Jerry Brown and his Republican opponent, Evelle Younger, in 1978 to the tune of over 5% of the California vote, is carrying the Libertarian banner.

To date, the LP has ballot status in 22 states, putting them far ahead of any of the other minor parties contending for some of the disgruntled vote. At a recent gathering in California the Clark campaign director announced that the LP planned to be on the ballot in all fifty states. This is no mean task, as some states are very difficult targets, even for the two major parties at times. The Republicans almost lost ballot status in Georgia in the last general election, but managed to hold on by electing a single congresscritter. The Libertarians are confident that they can garner the quarter million signatures in this state so that Georgians can be given a real alternative in 1980.

The national media is taking notice of the efforts of the LP and representatives of the media do not hesitate to call Mr Clark to get his views on the important issues of the day. Indicative of the ongoing success of the

crusading American Libertarians, *Newsweek* has deemed the LP the major minor party in America. It appears the party has reached the age of majority in half the usual time.

SIGN ON THE DOTTED LINE

A good deal of the current Libertarian Party success owes a debt to the efforts of the indefatigable members of the LP of California. Still several months before the general election, the LP in this state has qualified for ballot status. But unlike efforts in many other states which merely gain the party access to the ballot for a single election, the Californian Libertarians have achieved permanent ballot status by recruiting the requisite 73,233 members, officially registered with the party. In eight months Libertarian Party membership swelled from 1,000 to over 81,000. Jerry Brown, watch out!

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME

In the last Canadian General Election more than 100 adherents to a relatively new political philosophy ran for office under the name of the Rhinoceros Party. Although the party's origins are less than clear, some of these politicians maintain that they are spiritually descendant from a Brazilian rhinoceros who was once elected mayor of Sao Paulo. The rhinos' answer to the language problem in Canada is to advocate three official languages: English, French and illiteracy, and they offer to retrain those constituents who want to become illiterate (presumably by enrolling them in a state educational institution). Leaders of the RP were extremely upset with the Clark government when it reneged on most of its election promises shortly after taking office last year. They accused the Conservative Party of stealing their basic platform plank. To break all election promises. The RP often runs more than one of its own candidates in a district claiming that an MP's salary is certainly enough to support more than one person.

The Canadian Party's leader is Cornelius I, a resident of the Granby Zoo in Quebec. In the general election in 1979 the Rhinos received 63,000 votes, more than the combined total of the Libertarians, Communists and other

third parties. In the general election in February, the RP received some 110,000 votes, with some individual candidates receiving as much as 10% of the vote in a riding.

HALT, WHO GOES THERE?

The momentum of Proposition 13 has crossed the American border to the north and has brought overtaxed Canadians a mechanism to fight the powers that be. Human Action to Limit Taxes, HALT, (apologies to the late Professor Mises) is a Vancouver-based organisation formed in 1978, which wants its Charter put in the constitution. The charter would ban all indirect taxation, require balanced budgets, limit personal income tax to ten percent, limit property tax to one percent, trim the search and seizure powers of tax officials and allow employees to get pay cheques without tax deductions. It is not surprising then, that the organisation claims membership of over 1,500.

HALT's first major victory came this past autumn when they fought the building of a \$233.5 million Civic Centre project. They forced a plebiscite by collecting well over the 17,000 signatures required by the city hall. And while the government spent thousands of dollars of public money to advertise their cause, HALT's campaign to stop construction of the unwanted project was successful with virtually no money invested in reaching the people. A few days before the election, a columnist for the *Calgary Herald* wrote about the plebiscite, "City officials are very worried that we'll soon reach a point where every time council makes a decision, somebody will get an opposing petition Obviously the situation's getting out of hand and it's going to get worse." Let's hope so.

Free Life