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ALLiance Journal: a grassroots, shop-floor, dirt cheap, tabloid aspiring to inspire the Left-Libertarian Movement to delusions of grandeur. We are full of piss and passion; and we will never stop even in the face of singularity, peak oil or Ragnarok. Check us out at alliancejournal.net or libertyactivism.info.

ALLiance aims to be a movement journal for the Alliance of the Libertarian Left (ALL).

The Alliance of the Libertarian Left is a multi-tendency coalition of mutualists, agorists, voluntaryists, geolibertarians, left-Rothbardians, green libertarians, dialectical anarchists, radical minarchists, and others on the libertarian left, united by an opposition to statism and militarism, to cultural intolerance (including sexism, racism, and homophobia), and to the prevailing corporatist capitalism falsely called a free market; as well as by an emphasis on education, direct action, and building alternative institutions, rather than on electoral politics, as our chief strategy for achieving liberation.
Alliance of the Libertarian Left of New England

“Alliance of the Libertarian Left of New England works to create the intellectual environment for New Englanders to understand the nature of the relationship of the over-bearing state and other oppressive institutions in our society to the social problems we see around us. ALL-oNE provides educational material online and in print to spread ideas, both historical and contemporary, that offer solutions to the crises we face. We encourage students, workers, business leaders and others to implement modern anti-authoritarian solutions and create a parallel path to a freer society.”

ne.libertarianleft.org/

Markets Not Capitalism,
ed. Gary Chartier & Charles W. Johnson

“Libertarianism is often seen as a callous defense of privilege in the face of existing (and unjust) inequalities. That’s because it too often is. But it doesn’t have to be, and this fascinating collection of historic and current argument and scholarship shows why. Even readers who disagree will find much to think about.” – Ken Macleod, author of Fall Revolution

Available at: minorcompositions.info/?p=230
make the foundations for a free society soon. This is a path that requires flexibility, but it also requires an informed skepticism toward political sales pitches. A left-libertarian approach might or might not be explicitly anarchist, but it shares basic principles with anarchism and moves in that direction.

A left-libertarian approach is to build from the bottom up to displace the rule of political and economic elites and social authoritarians. It is for a society of free, autonomous, and flourishing individuals and the communities they create together.

By Darian Worden
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To Disperse Power:
A Left-Libertarian Approach to Politics
What does a left-libertarian want, and how should one move toward this goal?

Left-Libertarian?
“Left-libertarian” has a number of definitions. I tend to view the left-libertarian goal as follows:
To as much as possible disperse power in political, economic, and social relations among all individuals who respect the liberties of others, and displace authoritarian relations with consensual relations rooted in mutual cooperation.

What does that mean?
Political power is the power of coercion. Having unequal political power means being able to coerce others because you outrank them. Equalizing political power means that rules are agreed upon, interpreted, and enforced by people regarded as equals.

Economic power is the power to influence others through wealth. Just about everybody has some amount of economic power because just about everybody can create wealth by using mind and body. However, when some have much more than others they may have the ability to constrict the choices others can make. This does not mean that wealth can or should be held in equal part by all. When there is ample opportunity to pursue other alternatives, wealth loses its power to dominate.

Social power is the power exercised through custom, tradition, or social expectation. Respect is rooted in social expectations, and liberty is best assured by a culture that respects the freedom for individuals to develop rather than a culture that emphasizes rank and deference to those who outrank you.

Almost every time that any of these powers are vastly unequal, it is because they are all unequal. Having a large share of one means having the ability to trade for the others.

Equality in power enables individuals to have their best chance of...
flourishing. Society is best when individuals are at their best, and individu-
als do better in a better social environment. Autonomy does not necessary
mean relying on nobody, but instead having the ability to effectively choose
who to rely on.

Speaking broadly, but specifically
enough to show orientation, a left-lib-
ertarian approach is libertarian in that
it makes a priority of maximum indi-
vidual liberty, equal liberty for all. It is
also mutual, or cooperative, in that it
emphasizes voluntary organizations for
the common benefit of participants.
This does imply moving in an anar-
chist direction. Anarchism is not merely
a utopian dream where nobody is ever harmed, but can refer to a state of
affairs where no rulership is broadly considered legitimate power. One does
not have to fall under the label left-libertarian to be an anarchist or have to
be an anarchist to be a left-libertarian but there are general tendencies in
common.

A Hypothetical Platform
If there was hypothetically a left-libertarian political platform, what might
it look like? Let’s consider seven points for now.

1) Withdrawal of the military empire and a rollback of the internal state
security apparatus.

2) Break up the power of political and economic elites by highlighting
and disrupting their connection, and by creating and expanding grassroots
economic power.

Points 1 and 2 will immensely benefit the economy and liberty of the
average person under American government power.

3) End the Drug War, eliminate police brutality, and bring more account-
ability to police.

The government police force is the enforcement arm of the authoritarian
state. It is an organization that enforces its own monopoly, and responds to
political power. While this inherent function will encourage bad behavior,
within the context of a government police force, things can be made bet-
ter by reassigning the political priorities that police forces respond to and
introducing more accountability and community control into police forces.
Grassroots efforts like copwatch and copblock are essential to holding the
police forces in check.

4) Roll back draconian anti-migrant policies and seek to eliminate power
imbalance based on differences of ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation.

Points 3 and 4 will drastically cut the prison-industrial complex and its
modern slavery economics.

5) Establish more libertarian, mutual education.

context. This goes back to incentives. People who might otherwise become
politicians clutching at every string of power might instead seek to gain
influence through persuasion, not coercion, and they might find they are
more persuasive when viewed as one of the good guys. Such a cultural shift
is best created outside of the political system.

What about constitu-
tionalist politicians?
In the short term they
can be helpful at creat-
ing an atmosphere more
conducive to positive
changes – opening up
space for activists and
reducing the harm done
government in foreign
domestic affairs.

In the long term it is better to acknowledge the failures inherent in the
system and move forward from this reality with an eye toward developing
the better traditions.

If everyone signs on as a partisan of a political campaign, that then fo-
cuses everyone at a single point that’s failure could destroy the movement
and the credibility of ideas it professes – and this is a point that is likely to
bring many failures, as effecting change on the initiative of the top of the
political system means working through politicians and bureaucrats and
entrenched interests.

On the one hand, the greater success of politicians who use libertarian
talking points can make other politicians pander in this direction. But what
part of the platform would they listen to, and what if they just co-opt the
good rhetoric? And if good intentions from the top get twisted into harmful
policies when they reach the ground then the credibility of the initiator is
stained.

Both in order to create cultural
expectations for those in power
when it is time to disperse power,
and in order to ensure a healthy
counter to whatever politician
comes into power, it is essential to
have organization from below.

Conclusion
If it’s not possible to have a com-
pletely free society today, let’s
make it a freer society today and

A left-libertarian
approach is to build
from the bottom
up to displace the
rule of political and
economic elites and
social authoritarians.
supposed to direct the revolution from above that would eventually result in a withering away of the state and an end to exploitation.

Change should be primarily driven and established from below.

Theoretically, though, the interim towards a libertarian or more strictly anarchist society could benefit from a government of transition adjudicating disputes between political bodies and helping to ensure peaceful relations with outside powers.

It does seem like it would be a difficult task to ensure peace with other states, especially when:

a) major country with a huge military, including nuclear weapons, is seen as “collapsing” into anarchy

b) international finance worries about getting paid

c) a power-vacuum is seen that is ripe for exploitation (this would of course be mitigated by grassroots free association empowering individuals acting cooperatively, as previously discussed)

d) anarchists and revolutionaries are undermining foreign states

Foreign politicians might be on the lookout for someone who looks like he has some clout and is able to do business. Maybe people who are into the politician thing could then have a positive role, talking to the outside, placating nationalist tendencies. Maybe such a person could even be a representative of consensually-based confederated communities or organizations of polycentric law.

There is a problem here though: we’re talking about structures and institutions, but what about people and personalities?

Who is in the dismantling state or transition state?

What motivates them?

How do they give up power? They probably worked hard to get into a position to effect change from above and they might be convinced that they’re the best people for the job.

Are they seeking to direct loot into their own pockets?

Are they cutting deals to sell out the revolution?

Politicians, however, will be influenced by culture and the ways in which respect and reputation can be improved within the prevailing cultural

People who might otherwise become politicians clutching at every string of power might instead seek to gain influence through persuasion, not coercion, and they might find they are more persuasive when viewed as one of the good guys.

The authoritarianism that children are subjected to from the time they first salute the flag until the time they are permitted to enlist and vote is of critical importance. Addressing this issue should take priority over issues of school cost or the welfare of school staff. Regionally-divided government education also is a major contributor to economic segregation and wasteful municipal redundancy. Left-libertarians should seek to break the power of the schooling establishment and engage in serious efforts to create education alternatives that invite participation.

6) Protection of the environment in accord with human needs.

A healthier human environment – including the urban environment – leads to healthier people and relations. Wild places are important for human development. Today, rather than restrict pollution by treating it as injury to persons or possessions, the costs of pollution tend to be shifted to the least powerful.

7) Popular access to small arms.

While the organization of heavy weapons and the means to restrict weapons of mass destruction should be considered further, combat rifles and pistols should be generally available in order to hinder the ability of certain parties to monopolize power by monopolizing arms.

With the above “platform” for action in mind, some things should be considered. It could be argued that these points are more important than ending the state, since without the existence of broad libertarian and mutualist understanding, and the power to challenge authority, the ending of the state would only see the rise of new forms of authority rooted in social and economic power and won through political maneuvering. And while some of these points would have to be pursued outside of the system, in theory a country could exist where these points are all satisfied but there is still a government.

However, just because these planks theoretically could be accomplished under the existence of a state does not mean that the state should not be eliminated. The state is authoritarian and will exert authority. It is a dangerous establishment of legitimated authority that would always have to be kept in check. It is the primary tool that elites use to rule and to privilege others according to how much they help them keep in power.

The seven points, then, would be best pursued with the end goal of eliminating the state, but in cooperation with people who wish to implement
these points but do not necessarily want to end the state.

By making the state less valuable, we make it less powerful and therefore more vulnerable. Doing so will present opportunities to demonstrate libertarian principles in action. But movement toward liberty will be opposed by powerful enemies. Putting the state on the defensive, possibly even threatening the basis of its existence, will be necessary to win.

**Power Vacuum?**

I want to talk about power vacuums.

The phrase “power vacuum” might seem like it’s just something statists made up to scare people into submission, but it’s actually a useful concept to think about.

A power vacuum would imply that nobody has power. But what is power other than the ability to influence and effect changes, possibly concerning the behavior of others? Oppression is not the existence of power, but results from power imbalances or conflicts over power. When the authorities amass power they take it from individuals and communities – leaving a power vacuum in the common person’s life. But empowered people, with libertarian ethics, are better able to resist the impositions of others. So the left libertarian goal is not really to eliminate power, but to disperse power among all individuals who respect the liberty of others.

When power is dispersed, the state of affairs is not really a power vacuum, but widespread empowerment. The left-libertarian project then could be seen as a mass project of ethical, individual empowerment.

The left-libertarian project then could be seen as a mass project of ethical, individual empowerment.

By establishing formal or informal networks to meet needs outside of authorities and elites, left-libertarians will eliminate the real and perceived value of authorities and elites. These networks could operate on varying degrees of ideological commitment. They should never be thought of as deceptive front organizations to enlist useful idiots, but rather as means to work together on shared values while further developing values. Cooperative action then establishes a basis for further cooperative action and takes over the functions of authorities.

There are a number of examples of people with various political identities using mutual aid or cooperative networks. Within the Arab Spring uprisings, the Greek anti-authoritarians, and the Occupy gatherings, people have found it expedient and liberating to help meet each others’ needs outside of establishment means. Friendly societies have in earlier times helped participants find jobs, resources in hard times, or pooled medical expenses. Activist centers make it easier for people with shared values to participate in improving the world. Organizations like Food Not Bombs or Fr33 Aid provide more compassionate and personalized care than bureaucratic structures are typically capable of.

To develop these alternative networks to their fullest potential while discussing and demonstrating libertarian paths is a key component of liberation.

**Movement from Below**

The basis of left-libertarian political action is movement from below, from outside the political system, toward a free and just society.

Consensual, cooperative organization and networking provide the foundation for the future free society.

Libertarian social organization:

1) Provides libertarian structure to fall back on if current authorities fail, making it more difficult for other authorities to move in.

2) Incentivizes behavior, going beyond leading by example by setting expectations and creating incentives. When there are concrete benefits of participating in libertarian action, then more people will participate in them and abide by the included social norms.

It might be helpful to think of human organization as a series of networks, some more or less formal than others, some more or less libertarian than others.

By establishing formal or informal networks to meet needs outside of authorities and elites, left-libertarians will eliminate the real and perceived value of authorities and elites.