

West Coast LIBERTARIAN

PREMIER ISSUE

VOL I NO. 1

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER VANCOUVER LIBERTARIAN ASSOCIATION

Never on a Sunday

by Cam Osborne

The people and merchants of Vancouver recently have had yet another obstacle thrown in their way by government, namely, the Sunday closing laws. As of the first of January all places of business (with a few exceptions) must close their doors on Sundays.

Many Vancouver merchants, mostly small and independent, have devised ingenious ways of getting around the law. The proprietor of a beauty salon sold memberships for a Sunday "health club" while a busy downtown bookstore opened its doors on Sunday for "poetry readings." On January 11 many Gastown merchants opened their doors and offered an across-the-board 25% discount to shoppers who came to support them.

In a free market everyone benefits. On the other hand, when the state intervenes, some groups or individuals gain and others lose. This zero-sum situation must obtain whenever laws are passed. Thus, when the government passes some new law claiming the "betterment of society" as its object, it is always a useful and enlightening exercise to ask the question, "who benefits?" Who stands to gain (materially or otherwise) from the law?

In the case of our closing laws all we have to do is look at the groups who overtly supported the law. First there are the religious groups and churches who want everyone to spend "quieter" or "more meditative" Sundays, rather than indulge in "crass consumerism." Their benefit is psychic, a satisfaction in the knowledge that many people are prevented from acting contrary to certain Christian values.

Second, there are labour groups. Seeking to "protect" their members from being "forced to work longer hours and weeks", many unions have enthusiastically supported the law.

Closed stores on Sundays, however, also shut the door on increased employment for the part-time labour force, mainly poorer people and students. As a rule though, unions have never by their actions been for the interests of the poor and unemployed, only themselves.

Finally we have the big stores, notably

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Progress Report

The Greater Vancouver Libertarian Association is now underway! With 23 members and associates we are off to a good start. Our first major project - the Libertarian Supper Club - has been launched. Dinner gatherings will feature noted libertarian personalities and will offer those attending a stimulating evening of ideas, socializing, fun, food and entertainment. Plan to attend these and bring your friends along-- they're open to all. The first speaker will be Walter Block, long-time libertarian and defender of the free market.

Plans are also underway for the establishment of a Libertarian Book Store in Vancouver. This is a major undertaking and we need all the ideas, help and suggestions we can get. This city needs an alternative bookstore where people can obtain books and literature on freedom and libertarianism.

Our first meeting will be held in Vancouver sometime in the early spring. This will be held in conjunction with the Libertarian Supper Club and will feature a noted libertarian personality. Plan to attend to air your views and elect an executive.

Remember that any contribution to the Libertarian Party of Canada will give you a tax credit on your income tax (if you file!) of up to 75% of your contribution (see the tax guide for limits). And all of your money will go to the GVLA for local activities if you wish.

The Natural Gas Squeeze

by Marco den Ouden

Libertarians have long understood that freedom begets prosperity and that government interference with the natural order of the economy leads to dislocations.

Canada did not suffer the gasoline shortages our American neighbours suffered several years ago because Canadian governments did not meddle with fuel production and pricing to the extent that the U.S. government did.

But the Canadian government will not learn from America's errors. The recent energy policies of the federal government are wreaking havoc in energy production. Producers are packing up and heading for the U.S., especially since American energy production is starting to be deregulated.

As of January 1 over 50% of B.C.'s natural gas production was pushed into a money-losing position. On the same day a new 8% federal tax on petroleum revenues came into effect. This, of course, will provide great disincentives to explore for and produce energy.

Gas production in B.C. is divided into two categories, old gas (discovered before 1973) and new gas. Fifty-four percent of B.C.'s gas is old gas. All natural gas is bought from the producers by the provincial government-owned B.C. Petroleum Corporation. BCPC pays producers one rate for new gas and a lower rate for old gas. Producers have also been getting the same price for gas for three years now. Old gas production was only marginally viable before the 8% tax was introduced.

The BCPC also markets the gas and sets two prices, a low subsidized price for domestic consumers and a much higher price for exported gas. The price charged to foreigners has increased so drastically that BCPC has priced it out of the market and sales to the U.S. have slumped badly. American threats to buy elsewhere were met by huffy arrogance by Canadian politicians.

There is no free market in natural gas in B.C. Prices paid to producers and charged to consumers are set by government fiat. The government is now considering raising domestic prices and giving producers a raise. Why wasn't this done earlier rather

than let producers be pushed to the brink?

Another twist to the whole natural gas situation is that the federal crown corporation Petro-Can produces 50% of B.C.'s old gas. This government creature, of course, can and will be bailed out by the federal government no matter how badly it performs, placing private corporations at a great disadvantage.

The stage seems set for government corporations to squeeze out private producers and monopolize a resource which has the potential to provide North Americans with a cheap source of energy for many years to come. If this happens we will undoubtedly end up having our energy delivered with the same efficiency as our mail.

The choice seems to be between two alternatives: a free market or government monopoly--bountiful energy at the market price or freezing in the dark.

ANNOUNCEMENT !!!

LIBERTARIAN SUPPER CLUB

We are pleased to announce the formation of the Libertarian Supper Club of Vancouver. Our first dinner will be a baron of beef buffet at the Rembrandt Hotel, 1160 Davie St. on Friday, Feb. 6.

Our speaker for the evening will be Dr. Walter Block, author and senior economist at the Fraser Institute. His topic will be housing and rent controls in the lower mainland.

There will be a no-host bar at 6:00 pm and dinner will be served at 7:00. The banquet room location will be posted in the lobby.

Price per person is \$15.00 and the event is RSVP. If you wish, contact Marco den Ouden at 937-0529 for more details. This will be a great opportunity to meet new libertarian friends and to hear the case for rent controls demolished! Plan to attend and bring your friends!!

NEVER ON A SUNDAY (from page 1)

chains like Safeway, Woodwards and Sears. Historically big business has rarely been in favor of free enterprise and this is no exception. Large B.C. retailers face a fair amount of competition from smaller merchants when the latter are open for business on Sundays. The new closing laws are perfect for squelching this kind of competition.

Here is a clear illustration of exploitation through government power. Church groups, unions and big business exploiting the poor, the unemployed, non-Christians and small business owners.

The real issue here is freedom of choice, not whether people should be more relaxed, religious or reflective on Sundays.

We should emphasize to the large retailers that they do themselves (and us) no favors by preaching free enterprise and practicing protection. Likewise, if labor groups really have the interests of the working person at heart they should give up the practice of labor monopoly and allow a free

market in the work force. And we should remind our Christian friends that morality and "correct behaviour" are completely meaningless without freedom to make moral choices.

Thank God we don't get the government we pay for!

--Will Rogers

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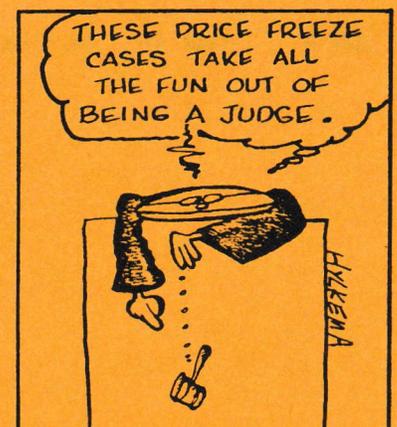
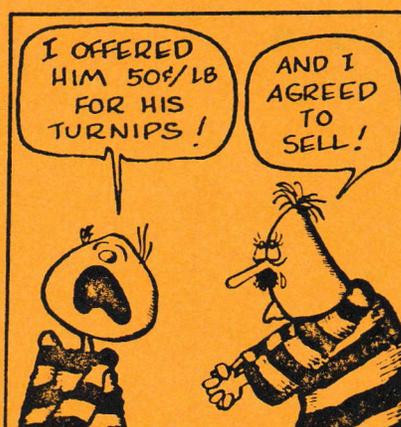
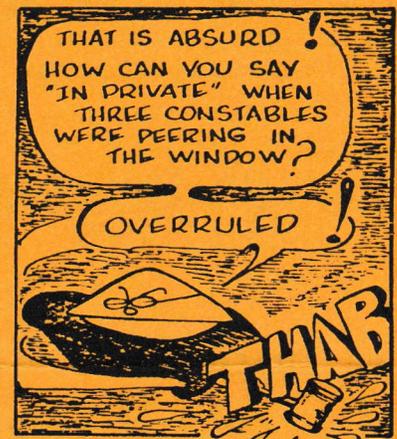
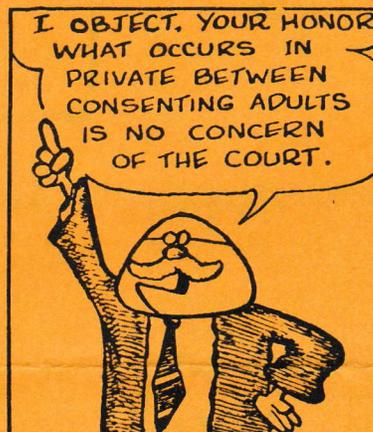
EDITOR
MANAGING EDITOR

Cam Osborne
Marco den Ouden

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RANDALL K HYLKEMA



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The Absurd Psalm

A psalm of a Canada Council
Grant recipient

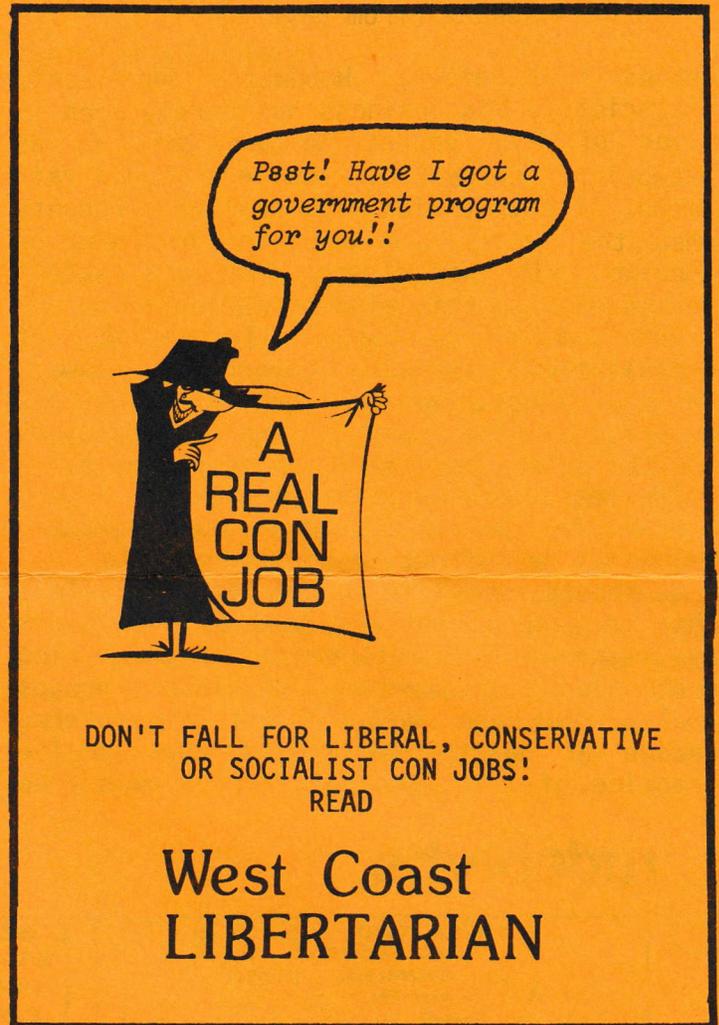
The government is my shepherd, I
need not work.

It alloweth me to lie down on
a good job. It leadeth me beside
still factories.

Yea, though I walk through the
valley of laziness and deficit
spending, I will fear no evil,
for the government is with me;
its LIP grants and UIC they
comfort me.

It preparerth an economic
utopia for me by appropriating
the earnings of my grandchildren.
It filleth my head with false
security. My inefficiency runneth
over.

Surely the government shall
care for me all the days of my
life: and I will dwell in a
fool's paradise forever.



the greater vancouver
LIBERTARIAN association

1027-B Alderson Ave., Coquitlam, B.C. V3K 1V8