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Libertarian

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GREATER VANCOUVER LIBERTARIAN ASSOCIATION

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Volunteers Needed

Second Season Under Way for GVLA

We're back! After a lengthy hiatus, the West Coast Libertarian is back in print again. Our apologies to our readers for the delay.

The GVLA faces some internal organizational problems which we hope can soon be resolved. Our biggest problem is lack of volunteers to assist in the management and smooth operation of the organization. So, if any of you are keen to see the GVLA thrive and expand and you have the time available to help out, please give us a call.

On February 14, several members met for an organizational meeting and several things were discussed. The most fruitful result of that meeting was the decision to order the Principles of Liberty program from the Society for Individual Liberty. We have ordered a package consisting of a Discussion Leader Handbook and 10 participant programs. Paul Geddes has offered to conduct these educational sessions.

Principles of Liberty is a home study/discussion course designed to provide a comprehensive, inexpensive and systematic introduction to Libertarianism. The group study program is organized around a series of Socratic dialogues where participants will discuss seven different topics over a period of several weeks.

Once the programs have arrived, we will establish definite dates and times for the

study sessions. If you're interested in participating, please contact Marco at 937-0529.

Also at the February 14 meeting, Secretary Marco den Ouden announced that he would like to resign as Secretary of the GVLA, and as co-ordinator of the Libertarian Supper Club. He will retain control and responsibility for publishing West Coast Libertarian.

So, we need volunteers to take the positions of Secretary and Supper Club Co-ordinator. The function of the Secretary is to maintain records of memberships, to handle correspondence, to advise Toronto of new members and changes in status of members, and to forward funds received to the Treasurer.

The Supper Club Co-ordinator has the responsibility of arranging guest speakers, arranging dining facilities, contacting members to assure a reasonable turnout, and arranging payment to the restaurant or hotel concerned.

If anyone is interested in either of these two positions, please call Marco at 937-0529. The most urgent requirement is for Supper Club Co-ordinator. A failure to fill this post will mean the end of the Supper Club.

The GVLA needs the active support of its members to survive. If you have the time and the inclination, we welcome your help.

Via Rail Subsidies Opposed

by Paul Geddes & Morley Evans

In September, the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada sent out a roving task force to gather people's reactions to the Via Rail cutbacks announced by the federal government. Vancouver's chapter of Human Action presented the following brief to the task force. We're sure you will find it interesting.

" 'Free enterprise' is a phrase which describes an economic system of free men who voluntarily exchange property that they own for mutual benefit. A mechanism called 'the market' reflects the desires of consumers and signals entrepreneurs (motivated by their own self-interest) to satisfy those desires with the most efficient use of resources.

" 'Free enterprise' does not describe an economic system in which certain goods and services are paid for with tax money because those that benefit are unwilling to bear the full cost.

" 'Free enterprise' does not describe an economic system which perpetuates out-moded services no longer wanted by consumers even when sold at greatly-discounted prices.

" 'Free enterprise' does not describe an economic system which frustrates change, growth, and misdirects and wastes scarce resources.

"In other words, 'free enterprise' does not describe the system Canadians find themselves burdened with today.

"One example of a wasteful subsidy that interferes with free enterprise is Via Rail. Almost a billion dollars of Canadian taxpayers' money was spent in 1979-80 to finance a service which benefited few people. Last year [1980], Via Rail required \$3 in subsidies for every \$1 they collected from passengers. By what right do users of Via Rail command the rest of us to pay three-quarters of their transportation costs?

"Because Canada is a country whose government supports numerous groups with money taken from taxpayers, a large outcry is to be expected from these special interests living off the avails of government when cut-backs are made. We are certain the time at these hearings has largely been monopolized by such complainers.

"Your time will also have been taken by utopians who have a grand dream of how they would like the world to be. These utopians wish to gain the favour of you politicians, so they can by-pass the dictates of the market, impose their schemes on the consumer and force him to pay, to boot. Let's examine a few of the arguments advanced by the complainers and the utopians.

"First, they believe that because passenger railroad service has great historical significance in Canada, we would somehow be 'less Canadian' without it. What rubbish! Do they also suggest we use taxpayers' money and the power of the state to force us back into the horse and buggy?

"Second, some believe that because we subsidize other modes of transportation we should subsidize Via Rail as well. There is much debate today about how large the relative subsidy for rail passengers is. In any case, it is clear that the subsidy per passenger-mile for rail services is inordinately high compared with other modes of transport. But this is beside the point. A person shouldn't be forced to hammer his left big toe today because he banged his right big toe yesterday. We should be moving toward no subsidy for all modes. All subsidies hurt. They interfere with purchases that consumers make willingly.

"Third, it has been proposed that Canadians need rail passenger service regardless of cost. This is simply ridiculous. Rail passenger service is a money-loser because consumers don't want it. They have consistently demonstrated by their choices freely made that they prefer other more convenient or faster modes of transport. They were not attracted to rail even when the offered price was so low that the operation lost money.

"The government must stay out of the way, and if Via Rail is unable to make ends meet, it must be allowed to pass out of existence. Rail passenger service will be replaced when new forms of mass transit can offer consumers more of what they want-- presumably better service, shorter travel time, more safety and less cost. These new forms must be built risking private capital without the use of the coercive agents of taxation, monopoly and expropriation.

"Finally,... it is very unwise for a 'free enterprise' party to attack the government for finally doing something right. On an occasion when the Liberal Minister of Transportation experiences a lucid moment and decides that enough tax money has been wasted on a white elephant like Via Rail, we should applaud him. We should jump for joy and encourage Mr. Pepin to start cleaning up other areas as well. Unfortunately, ... the federal P.C. party has only served to confuse this man -- and everyone else too.

"By criticizing Mr. Pepin and pandering to special interests and a few misguided ideologues who believe in free lunches, you may win their support for a time-- but the people of this country are not stupid. They know the Party is just playing politics with this issue. Rather than trying to muddy ideological waters which are already none too clear, the Party should be forthright and honest about the need for less government, lower taxes and fewer subsidies for money losers. Don't hold hearings across Canada about Via Rail cuts. Praise them. Instead, hold hearings about Mr. Pepin's latest venture-- to further extend the airline monopolies in Canada to benefit existing carriers at the expense of the consumer.

"There is no shortage of things to criticize about the Trudeau government. Why waste time and your supporters' money being critical of the things they do right? The Progressive Conservative Party of Canada only hurts itself and its own constituency of freedom-loving people with these hearings.

Your party's constituency consists of those Canadians sick of paying 50% of their hard-earned income to government for it to waste on give-away programs like Via Rail. To unite this constituency into a body of support, able to elect and keep you in power, the Party must learn to forego any temporary advantage gained from politically-motivated grandstanding, such as these hearings, for the long-term benefits to be gained from the construction of a coherent platform consistent with the principles of freedom."



Ayn Rand
1905 - 1982

Ayn Rand, author and philosopher, died March 6 at her home in New York City.

The author of *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Fountainhead* and numerous non-fiction works was influential in the libertarian movement, even though she personally disapproved of it. Her philosophy of objectivism argued for the supremacy of reason, the individual and capitalism.

She will be sadly missed and lovingly remembered by her legions of fans.

In today's troubled times, her works and her wisdom are more needed than ever. The philosophic seeds she spread have taken root and perhaps this generation will see the philosophic revolution she inspired but which failed to materialize in her lifetime.

Coming Events

Sunday evenings: Paul Geddes hosts an informal gathering in his home, to listen to Nathaniel Branden's Basic Principles of Objectivism lectures. For time and place, please phone Paul at 689-5260.

Thursday evenings: First Freedom Toastmasters Club meets at Provincial Progressive Conservative headquarters, Suite 210 - 540 Seymour Street, Vancouver at 5:30 p.m. It will cost only \$2.00 to attend as a guest. If you would like to improve your public speaking ability, you are welcome to attend a meeting and find out about Toastmasters.

Last Monday of each month: Human Action to Limit Taxes holds a public meeting on the last Monday of every month, at 7:30 p.m., at the Scottish Auditorium, 1605 West 12th Ave., Vancouver.

Tuesday, March 23: at 12:00 noon MILTON FRIEDMAN will be speaking at the Hyatt Regency Ballroom. His topic will be Current Economic and Political Developments in the United States. Tickets are available through the Fraser Institute at the cost of \$30.00 per person. GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!!!

Our next Supper Club Meeting will be held on Saturday, April 10, at 7:00 p.m., at the Golden Crown Restaurant, 124 West Hastings (Hong Kong Room). Our guest speaker will be Dr. Walter Block, the chief economist for the Fraser Institute. Dr. Block will be discussing How to Privatize Government Owned Resources. The cost to attend will be \$14.00 per person, and will include a ten course meal. To confirm reservations, please phone Paul Geddes at 689-5260 before Wednesday, April 7.



the greater vancouver
libertarian association

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