

THE PUBLIC TROUGH

Libertarians in government

BRUCE BARTLETT

POTENTIALLY one of the most exciting periods in the modern history of libertarianism will begin this month when at least two (possibly three) full-fledged, hard-core libertarians take over the duties of the offices to which they were elected in the November elections.

The first of these is Dick Randolph, who was elected to the Alaska State Legislature, not simply as a libertarian but as the candidate of the Libertarian Party. This is a victory of unprecedented proportions. For the first time in the brief history of the Libertarian Party it actually has someone holding office. In my opinion, this is a far bigger step toward

achieving the ultimate legitimacy of the Libertarian Party than even Roger MacBride's famous electoral vote cast for the national Libertarian ticket in 1972.

The second libertarian elected in the November election was not elected on the Libertarian Party ticket, but is nevertheless as libertarian as anyone reading this magazine. He is Dr. Ron Paul, elected to Congress from the 22nd district in Texas on the Republican ticket.

This is Dr. Paul's second time around. He was first elected to Congress in April of 1976 when his predecessor resigned. It was a tough election for Ron. First he had to win the Republican primary against several strong challengers. Then, in the first special election, Ron finished second. But because of a third party candidate, the winner failed to get the required 50 percent of the vote. So there was another special election a short time later. This time it was Ron Paul who finished on top and went to Washington. Unfortunately, it was a short-lived victory. That November, Ron Paul and his Democratic challenger, Bob Gammage, squared off again—for the third time—and it was Gammage who won this time. But the margin was extraordinarily close: less than 100 votes out of almost 200,000 cast—the largest voter turnout in the district's history. Although voting irregularities were numerous, Gammage retained his vic-

tory against Ron Paul's congressional and court challenge.

For the past two years Ron has continued his campaign, despite a heavy work schedule as a medical doctor. For example, a newsletter he established while in Congress was continued and mailed to all his supporters. And a telephone call-in service he established to inform constituents was also continued. So in November it was Ron Paul versus Bob Gammage for the fourth, and hopefully last, time. Although Gammage received all the support his party could provide him, including a personal visit to the district by President Carter, Ron Paul was again elected to Congress by a comfortable 1,000 vote margin.

A possible third libertarian was also elected to Congress from Texas in November. He is Dr. Phillip Gramm of the 6th congressional district. Gramm holds a Ph.D.

in economics and has been teaching economics at Texas A & M University for several years. He was elected as a Democrat.

Gramm first rose to prominence a few years ago after the Arab oil embargo. It was at this time that the nation first began to hear about the so-called energy shortage affecting the planet. In a famous article for the *Wall Street Journal* (November 30, 1973), Gramm argued persuasively that there was no general shortage of energy, just a temporary shortage caused by government policies. He noted that there had been previous energy shortages throughout history, such as during the mid-1800s when whale oil began to run out, ultimately to be replaced by petroleum. This article caused quite a stir and has made Gramm one of the leading exponents of a free market in energy ever since.

I know that Ron Paul is a



INDIANAPOLIS STAR

sincere libertarian (I served on his congressional staff the first time around), but it is too soon to tell about Gramm. Although Gramm has written forcefully about the free market for such magazines as *Reason* and *Human Events*, I don't know where he stands on critical foreign policy and social issues. But even if he is in fact a libertarian on these issues as well, he will be hard-pressed to stay that way once he gets to Congress. Too often, libertarian-leaning men have come to Washington only to be corrupted by the system. And the most corrupting influence of all has nothing to do with lobbyists, campaign contributions, special interests, or any of the other things usually discussed. It is simply the influence that your fellow congressmen have. Call it peer-pressure or whatever; when the other members start to lean on you the pressure is almost unbearable. An example of a congressman who has been utterly ostracized by his unwillingness to go along is Larry McDonald of Georgia. Unfortunately, McDonald is not a libertarian but a conservative John Bircher. Nevertheless, one has to admire him for standing up for his principles, even if they are wrong.

The critical importance of having a few libertarians or quasi-libertarians holding any political office is that they take libertarianism out of the realm of theory and into the real world. It is a constant struggle to find ways of translating the theory into practice, and in a way that can attract political support. But it must be done. I know that Dick Randolph and Ron Paul can do it. I just hope that they are not made to carry the whole burden themselves for too long, or they will get discouraged. If a few good prospects like Phil Gramm can join their ranks then we may be well on the road to a libertarian renaissance. □

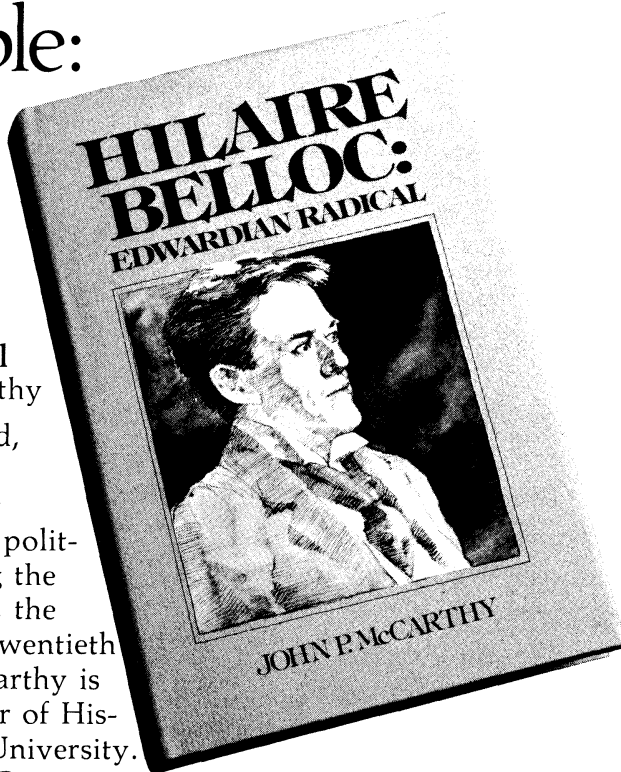
Now Available:

**Hilaire Belloc:
Edwardian Radical**
By John P. McCarthy

A perceptive, lucid, and carefully-researched look at Belloc and British political history during the Edwardian period, the first years of the twentieth century. Dr. McCarthy is Assistant Professor of History at Fordham University. Hardcover \$8.00, Paperback \$3.00.

The Servile State
By Hilaire Belloc

A perceptive warning, first published in 1913, of the consequences of statism and the effect of socialist doctrine on capitalist society. With an introduction by Robert Nisbet. "A landmark of political thought in this century" — Walter Lippmann. Hardcover \$8.00, Softcover \$2.00.



LibertyPress LibertyClassics

We pay postage on prepaid orders.
To order these books, or for a copy
of our catalog, write:
LibertyPress/LibertyClassics
7440 North Shadeland, Dept. F17
Indianapolis, Indiana 46250

THE PLUMB LINE

Statism, left, right and center

MURRAY N. ROTHBARD

"LEFT," "RIGHT," and "center" have increasingly become meaningless categories. Libertarians know that their creed can and does attract people from all parts of the old, obsolete ideological spectrum. As consistent adherents of individual liberty in all aspects of life, we can attract liberals by our devotion to civil liberty and a non-interventionist foreign policy, and conservatives by our adherence to property rights and the free market. But what about the *other* side of the coin? What about authoritarianism and statism across the board?

For a long while it has been clear that statist, right, left and center, have been

growing more and more alike—that their common devotion to the State has transcended their minor differences in style. In the last decade, all of them have been coagulating into the center, until the differences among "responsible" conservatives, right-wing Social Democrats, neo-conservatives, and even such democratic socialists as John Kenneth Galbraith and Robert Heilbroner, have become increasingly difficult to fathom.

The common creed central to all these groupings is support for, and aggrandizement of, the American State, at home and abroad. Abroad, this means support for ever greater military budgets, for FBI and CIA terrorism, for a foreign policy of global intervention, and absolute backing for the State of Israel. Domestically there are variations, but a general agreement holds that government should not undertake more than it can achieve: in short, a continued, but more efficiently streamlined welfare state. All this is bolstered by an anti-libertarian policy on personal freedom, advancing the notion, for either religious or secular reasons, that the State is the proper vehicle for coercively imposing what these people believe to be correct moral principles.

This coalition of statists has been fusing for some years; but recently a new outburst of candor has let many cats out of the proverbial

bag. It all began in the summer 1978 issue of the socialist magazine *Dissent*, edited by ex-Trotskyist Irving Howe. A lead article by the best-selling economist Robert Heilbroner says flat out that socialists should no longer try to peddle the nostrum that central planning in the socialist world of the future will be cojoined with personal freedom, with civil liberties and freedom of speech. No, says Heilbroner, socialists must face the fact that socialism will have to be authoritarian in order to enforce the dictates of central planning, and will have to be grounded on a "collective morality" enforced upon the public. In short, we cannot, in Heilbroner's words, have "a socialist cake with bourgeois icing," that is with the preservation of personal freedom.

An intriguing reaction to the Heilbroner piece comes from the right-wing. For years, a controversy once raged amidst the intellectual circles on the right between the "traditionalists," who

eagerly to Power. Now, Dale Vree, a regular columnist for *National Review*, takes the opportunity to hail the Heilbroner article and to call for a mighty right-left coalition on behalf of statism. ("Against Socialist Fusionism," *National Review*, December 8, 1978, p. 1547). He also slaps at the fusionists by pointing out that the "socialist fusionists," those trying to fuse economic collectivism with cultural individualism, necessarily suffer from the same inconsistencies as their counterparts on the right-wing, who have tried to join economic individualism with cultural collectivism.

Vree writes: "Heilbroner is also saying what many contributors to *NR* have said over the last quarter-century: you can't have both freedom and virtue. Take note, traditionalists. Despite his dissonant terminology, Heilbroner is interested in the same thing you're interested in: virtue."

But Vree's enthusiasm for the authoritarian socialist

"A new polarization is fast taking shape. The lines are drawn with increasing clarity. Big government, coercion, statism—or individual liberty."

made no pretense about interest in liberty or individual rights; the libertarians, who have long since abandoned the right-wing; and the "fusionists," led by the late Frank Meyer, who tried to fuse the two positions into a unified amalgam. Both the "trads" and libertarians realized early that the two positions were not only inconsistent but diametrically opposed.

In recent years, the trads have been winning out over the fusionists in the conservative camp, as the conservatives have sidled up more

does not stop there. He is also intrigued with the Heilbroner view that a socialist culture must "foster the primacy of the collectivity" rather than the "primacy of the individual." Moreover, he is happy to applaud Heilbroner's lauding of the alleged "moral" and "spiritual" focus of socialism as against "bourgeois materialism." Vree quotes Heilbroner: "Bourgeois culture is focused on the *material achievement* of the individual. Socialist culture must focus on his or her *moral or spiritual achievement*." Vree