



PUBLISHING WITHOUT PERISHING

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FOR LIFE, LIBERTY AND PROPERTY

PUBLISHING WITHOUT PERISHING

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This is a pamphlet about how libertarians should set about being effective publishers, and in particular it is about how the Libertarian Alliance does its publishing.

Many of the difficulties which the Libertarian Alliance faces, and European libertarians generally face, are the consequence of how American libertarians do things. Europe is not like America, and projects which work well in America won't work in Europe. But because the American libertarian literature looms so large within the movement as a whole, European libertarians are too ready to assume that being a libertarian necessarily means resembling an American libertarian as closely as possible. But we in Europe have better organisational models right in front of us, exactly crafted to suit the local scene, and just as impressive as anything that Americans are doing. Being British, I believe I have most to learn from those two brilliantly effective organisations, the Institute of Economic Affairs and the Adam Smith Institute. I will describe the nature of the American influence on Europe libertarianism, and then go on to explain how the IEA and the ASI have done what they have done. Then I will describe how the Libertarian Alliance fits into the resulting picture, and how it operates.

Nothing that follows constitutes any sort of claim that either the IEA or the ASI would endorse the "libertarian package" in its entirety, still less the particular positions that have been adopted and the particular views that have been published by the Libertarian Alliance. Both these organisations have done great things for the cause of liberty, but they each, as I shall explain, have had their own distinctive way of doing things, which has been quite different to the way that publicly self-advertised libertarians operate, or should operate. Even to say that the IEA, the ASI and the LA "complement" each other - as some do say - suggests a degree of organisational cross-endorsement and co-ordination that simply does not happen. We each go our own way, just as all of us have had to keep American models of action at arms length. Such independence of mind and method is one of the most important lessons that a libertarian activist of any kind must learn.

Nor do I intend to suggest that the LA has already achieved as much as these other groups, merely (a) that we intend to, and (b) that we know how to make this happen.

ARGUING FOR LIBERTY IN AMERICA

The United States of America is not now an outstandingly libertarian country. But it used to be, and it is also the place with the most libertarian written constitution and the most libertarian intellectual tradition. America is, therefore, the most libertarian country in the following sense: that when demanding a new raft of government grants or regulations or prohibitions, American speechmakers and opinion formers tend to justify such acts by asserting that they are "in defence of freedom", "in support of the free enterprise system". Ever more intense restriction of medical activity is said to enhance "free enterprise medicine" by preventing bad doctors from practising and thereby discrediting free enterprise medicine. Grants to failing businesses "support capitalism". And so on.

Speeches - even the most hypocritical and self contradictory speeches - have consequences. Other Americans react to humbug about freedom from those curbing it by insisting that freedom means freedom, and that the American Constitution means what it says. And even if nobody else pays much attention, the giver of a speech is frequently deeply moved by his own utterances and he at least may give them prolonged thought. He at least may want to think that the words he emits add up and make sense. If only a small percentage of Americans decide to take all of these fine words seriously, that still adds up to a huge number of Americans. For these reasons, the American libertarian movement is numerically vast compared to all other libertarian movements in other parts of the world.

However, American libertarianism is not as strong as its numbers should make it. The very process that makes American libertarians numerous also makes them less good at arguing their case. When they get into argumentative difficulties, then instead of arguing their points through with mere logic or mere evidence, American libertarians are tempted simply to reach for their Constitution. They are rather like those Marxists who concentrate all their energies on the question of what Marx himself said, instead of arguing that what they themselves believe is right. At critical moments in debate, for example, Americans are liable simply to *announce* that people have certain fundamental "natural rights", because goddammit that's what the Founding Fathers of the United States said and fought for. A European would want to ask whether these founders were right, and those European libertarians who think that they *were* right (not all of us do) get into the habit of explaining why. Meanwhile, the manifest libertarianism of much of American culture means that thousands of Americans will always be found who are willing to support any libertarian venture, however worthy or worthless it may be.

American libertarians tend therefore to be two things, at any rate by European standards: populists, and rich. They are populists, because libertarianism overlaps quite substantially with what their potential mass audience is ready to be told. And they are rich because this mass audience, taken together, has lots of money. By the sheer weight of the numbers involved, many American libertarians are millionaires, and several of those millionaires are generous, ready to write out large cheques for the intellectual enterprises that peddle their preferred intellectual products. Even the poorer American libertarians, taken together, add up to a substantial market for the books and writings of the better known libertarian movement writers, such as Hayek, Friedman, von Mises, Rand, and so on. (One can, of course, be major libertarian movement writer, without being a self-proclaimed libertarian. The ideas have their own logic.) It also helps that Americans seem to be absolute suckers, compared to Europeans, for good causes, advertised through the post.

THE FUTILITY OF POPULIST LIBERTARIANISM

The trouble with American populist libertarianism is that although lots of people may be reading the stuff, they tend

not to learn very much from it, for it merely thunders forth with their already existing prejudices. The same themes are gone over time and time again, Austrianism, privatisation, the failure and wickedness of communism, the dreadfulness of the Federal Budget. Oddly enough, the best libertarian writing by Americans seems now to be done by people who *don't* define themselves as libertarians. Having refused to decide beforehand what to think about everything, these people, unlike too many American libertarians, have continued to *think*. Many of these fine people call themselves "conservatives". And since conservatism isn't such an obvious thing for an American to believe in as "freedom", the case has to be argued through all the time.

In Europe, many of the popularly dominant ideas really *are* conservative, and it is not the libertarians but the self-styled conservative writers who - because they *can* - write vapid, repetitive and populist rubbish, riddled with kindergarten *non sequiturs* and elementary errors of fact. Europeans are at present no more averse to the *reality* of freedom and free enterprise than are Americans, and the statistics of economic achievement now reflect this. The difference is that Europeans are less disposed to make speeches in favour of free enterprise when trampling upon it. Our task, you might say, is to create the intellectual, political and cultural conditions that existed in the latter half of the eighteenth century throughout the Anglo-Saxon world, and which resulted, among many other good things, in the American constitution being written the way it was. Quite a job.

But, influenced by America's libertarian populists, many of our local libertarians spout nonsense about how there *is* a huge market in Britain for libertarianism "out there". The Americans publish libertarian "best-sellers", or seem to. Look at the Laissez-Faire Books catalogue! So why don't we? "Why don't you?" is the exact phrase. Chris Tame and I, when blowing off steam about our more tiresome comrades, regularly rage against the why-don't-yous.

But there is no undiscovered "mass market" for libertarianism, not in Britain, and not in the rest of Europe. And insofar as there is such a market it has been laboriously created, and insofar as it now collectively expresses "mass" demands for anything, this is now dealt with by those who deal with the other intellectual mass markets. Those who now peddle crypto-Marxism, environmentalism, pulp fiction, travel books and how-to books *already* put out the occasional Milton Friedman volume whenever that seems appropriate, using just the same editors, designers, blurb-writers and printing presses as they do for all their other products. George Gilder and P. J. O'Rourke are nothing like straight libertarian cardcarriers, but they're on roughly the right wavelength and write in a more popular style than Friedman, and they've also been published in paperback in Britain recently, as has George Axelrod's sublime *The Evolution of Co-operation*. But no "libertarian mainstream publisher" such as populist libertarians dream of could possibly make any sort of living publishing an uninterrupted stream of such volumes. Simply as a business, this does not make sense. It means courting too much disaster, and neglecting too much potential success. The huge fixed overheads of best-selling wouldn't begin to be covered.

From time to time one of our local libertarians with money to spare does attempt such a project, and occasionally he begins with some beginner's luck. But the venture soon collapses, surrounded by appalling numbers of cardboard boxes filled with unshiftable garbage. Usually the man

writing the cheques will also himself have written some of the unshiftable garbage. Similar operations attempted by those with money that they can't spare are even more distressing. And of course, people stupid enough to behave like this are not likely to preside over the production of very magnificent intellectual products.

Worse, populists often *oppose* the more "extreme" forms of libertarianism - in other words libertarianism! They do this (a) because they do, and would prefer the word libertarianism to be applied to their own more statist and authoritarian views, and (b) because, they say, "extreme" libertarianism will *put people off*. It will put off, that is, all those millions of normal, sensible, but yet libertarian folks "out there". That these millions of libertarians out there are a figment of the populist libertarian imagination does not make the populist libertarian opposition to actual libertarianism any less determined or tiresome.

IEA

So what, as Lenin asked of his own movement, is to be done? You're a socially quite well connected sort of a fellow, with lots of rich acquaintances, and with the energy to cultivate plenty more. What do you do if your rich supporters demand immediate results for their money, while you know that this is impossible and that the job must start with academics and intellectuals, rather than with mass publicity and instant policy transformations? There being no mass market for liberty, how do you find the money, now, instantly, to start financing the creation of such a market? Are you bright enough to get instantly wealthy, and yet bright enough in a quite different way to realise that liberty is a lifetime project, and more? What do you do about rich people who say they believe in freedom but who, to an appalling degree, don't? Do you somehow magic their money out of their wallets anyway, and, despite having the poor taste to be willing to sacrifice the only life you have consorting with such people, do you nevertheless have the brains to team up with somebody else, deeply unfoolish, who does your editing and supervises your publishing? And does your editor have the brain and the brawn to publish everything sensible that the rich people will permit, nothing sensible that they won't, and nothing senseless? It's asking a hell of a lot. It is called the Institute of Economic Affairs.

So, the miracle of the IEA having happened, *then what?* The academics are starting to teach sense and the men in suits are starting to see it. But what are they to do, given that the IEA has no very coherent ideas on the subject? Be the Prime Minister? Be the Chancellor of the Exchequer? And then be sensible! Be determined! But what if you are *not* the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer? Or what if you are the Prime Minister or the Chancellor of the Exchequer, but are not determined enough, or not sensible enough? The basic IEA message about persuading the state to be less hurtful to the free market is that so far as immediate result are concerned this is a mug's game, "public choice theory" being the name they give to this gloomy prognostication. Occasionally the IEA people do try some pro-free market lobbying, and the way they do it, it *is* a mug's game.

ASI

So do you perhaps try to increase the success of pro-free market lobbying not by increasing the quality of each pro-

posal and the ferocity with which it is proposed and the quantity of plutocrats and academics who propose it (the IEA method - futile), but by assembling some cheap (IEA educated) intellectual labour and producing more - many, many more - pro-free market proposals, a tiny proportion of which will - the law of averages being the law of averages - catch on, get noticed, get talked about, and even, you never know, get done? Are you clever enough to see that if you get a quarter out of a ten each week with your pro-free market proposals, then that's a success rate of twelve per year? Are you clever enough to see that this is enough to keep you and your operation permanently in the news and in a state of permanent high achievement, even though the overwhelming majority of the consumers of the news thoroughly disapprove of the ideas which lie behind your efforts? Are you clever enough to make the money you need to start up this intellectual production line, and clever enough to see that all the publicity you get will keep the funds flowing? Are you arrogant enough to inform everybody that this project will succeed? Are you humble enough to allow most of your proposals to "fail"? Are you humble enough to listen politely while IEA educated academics explain *why* your entire project (as opposed to the unimportant ninety five percent of it) is doomed, and do you still listen politely when they later explain that you are still *really* failing even when you aren't? "We've tried to think how such a project might succeed and we have not and cannot, so obviously it's impossible. We are professors at major universities. We win Nobel Prizes every other year. It won't work; it can't work; it isn't working; it hasn't worked. Sorry." Are you arrogant enough to realise that this is nonsense, and that when it comes to clever pro-free market lobbying you and your gang of interchangeable teenagers and obscure middle rank bureaucrats are worth all of them put together? Are you humble enough to realise that you need these damned professors, and that you must be willing to spend your entire life jollyng them along and generally allowing them to imagine that they thought of it all? Are you humble enough to spend your entire life telling *all* of your acquaintances only those exact things that they each wish to hear and none of those things that you need them not to hear, and clever enough never to get your acquaintances confused with one another? When you do and your acquaintances call you a cad and a bounder, are you humble enough to take it? Does the strain of being the unacknowledged legislator of mankind sometimes get you down? It is called the Adam Smith Institute.

CONSERVATIVE STUDENTS

Good. *Then what?* The men in suits are not only talking sense, they're starting to do it? The second hand dealers in ideas are beginning to spot what's going on and are snatching at passing bandwaggon. What, ask the second hand dealers, are these privatisation maniacs *really doing?* What is their *secret agenda?* The men in suits of the socialist world have also seen sense, so socialism as an intellectually significant trend in human affairs has disintegrated and is starting to retreat even in those bastions of intellectual reaction, the universities. There is both a sudden demand for, and a sudden gap for ... libertarianism! The distilled essence of the neo-liberal revival. Hayek without the waffle and equivocation. Friedmanism, as cleaned up and made to sparkle by Milton's son David. The collected deductions of Murray Rothbard, the libertarian logician who has lost everything except his libertarian logic. If it was right to denationalise steel, why is it wrong to denationalise money?

Has Thatcherite control of the money supply really been such a huge success? If the freedom to take risks with your life savings and start a small business is so marvellous, what of the freedom to ingest naughty drugs? So school catering services are being privatised? Fine. How about the Queen?

The youth wing of the Conservative Party spreads it all, in spite of itself and in spite of the periodic closures and name changes that Conservative Party Central Office unleashes. It starts with Federation of Conservative Students "libbies" for whom the word "libertarian" is a mere stick to beat their more genteel and centrist opponents, the hated "wets". The state is too big. It must be "cut down to size", "smashed", as must the USSR, the Argies, the unions, etc. And that's libertarianism that is! The libbies start to read libertarian publications, to find out what they've been putting on their posters. The wets broadcast the same libertarian message, explaining in gruesome detail what it is and why it is so wicked. The wets focus on the most interesting and scandalous bits of libertarianism, the ones most likely to interest the cleverest students. The libertarian contagion spreads. Five years later libertarian books are being read from cover to cover and footnoted in genteel little papers put out by the "Conservative Collegiate Forum". The left, which knows all about extremist infiltration, begins to smell excitement and strife in the Conservative Party so they too start to ask about libertarianism. Heretically, some of them rather like it too.

All the while, despite many confusions and setbacks, the number of libertarian pamphlets available slowly grows. Their production and distribution becomes gradually less chaotic. It is called the Libertarian Alliance.

A HUGE VARIETY OF WRITINGS AND WRITERS

Merely repeating that private affluence is preferable to public squalour is boring. True, but boring. Responsible persons in suits with trains to catch, branches to manage and important deals to finalise will concur, even as they mutter that they have heard this stuff before. And what of the many other people who contribute their bits and pieces to that collective stew called public opinion? What of art students, bearded research assistants in government safety laboratories, lady schoolteachers, pornographers, clergymen, the staff of state mental hospitals grappling with government cuts, or journalists on *The Guardian* or *Marxism Today* or the *New Musical Express*? If no attempt is made to inform such non-pin-striped persons about libertarianism then sooner or later even the people in the pin-stripes will lose interest. Okay, okay, socialism has failed. Do I need a lifetime of annual subscriptions to make me remember this?

Although many of them fail to realise it, extreme libertarianism helps the pin-striped people. What do they know of privatising British Rail, who write only about privatising British Rail? One of the many benefits of publishing an interesting piece of libertarian writing about, say, animal rights, or jewelry design, or the thirteenth century or the twenty third century, is that it causes libertarianism to get noticed by a greater variety of people, which means all libertarian publications will then have more clout, including even the hopelessly unoriginal and repetitious ones about the superiority of free markets over state economic planning and the consequent necessity of privatising British Rail. Privatising British Rail, like so many other valuable projects in this life, can and must be advanced by indirect as

well as direct methods. Marc-Henri Glendening, the former Chairman of the former Federation of Conservative Students, puts it well. We've got to make the case for freedom, he says, sexy. Libertarianism *is* sexy. The populist fallacy is that libertarianism can only thrive if it is made to seem safe, but it is its very unsafeness that causes bright young people to notice it, and to start thinking about the principles that are behind all its excitements concerning sex and drugs and privately owned firearms. Obviously freedom *includes* the freedom to own a Ford Granada and live in Horsham with your husband and two-point-four children, but it also includes the freedom to attend an acid house party after a hard week spent trading in human kidney futures to finance your dream of becoming a lunar property developer.

What does all of this say about the libertarian publishing enterprise? What it says is that libertarianism requires a huge *range* of writing to be done, by a huge range of different people, of wildly differing cultural backgrounds, of almost comically contrasting attitudes to sex, money, religion, recreational drugs, the environment, art, science, music, in fact to just about everything including even liberty itself, of extremely contrasted levels of wealth and income, and from all over the world.

THE PHOTOCOPIER AND THE PRINTING PRESS

Both the IEA and the ASI have major intellectual concessions built into their way of working. The IEA confines itself to the safe and respectable bits of the case for liberty. It sticks, in other words, to the "economic" arguments, just as its name suggests, and it hasn't even dealt with all of those arguments. Its donors having been the kind of people and enterprises who shelter behind tariff barriers, the IEA has remained mute on the subject of tariff barriers. The ASI tries to give *everybody* what they want. The media get stories. Other people get proposals carefully crafted to suit each of *them* very nicely thankyou, with everything phrased in a centrist, concerned and caring manner so as not to frighten the public at large. You will search the ASI's output in vain for dramatic libertarian pronouncements about drugs, firearms or prostitution. Consequently, fundraising for the IEA and for the ASI is, if not easy, at least easier than it could ever be for the LA, which goes out of its way to be scandalous and to outrage majority opinion, and which doesn't mind being ignored by the media so long as real people keep on reading the stuff and keep on writing it. Luckily the ideas have a logic of their own, and the LA exists to pursue that logic where the IEA and the ASI fear to tread.

Which is all very fine, but what does the LA do about money? The answer is that instead of thoughtlessly incurring huge costs and then sweating blood to *cover* our costs, we concentrate instead on *cutting* those costs to the point where covering them is far less of a problem.

The reason both for the extreme efficacy of the Libertarian Alliance, and for its reputation for inefficacy among those who imagine it to be inefficacious, is that the LA relies on photocopying instead of printing.

The computer and the television are usually held to be the big agents of technologically induced change these days. Much less made of the humble photocopier, which I believe to be almost as important in its quieter way. The impact of the photocopier can be summarised by saying that it destroys the rigid distinction between a "publication" and a

mere discussion document, between something "everyone knows" and an internal memo.

The printing press creates frazzled nerves and hysteria wherever it is relied upon. "Going to press" is always a frantic leap into the unknown. Who knows what the reaction of "the public" will be? Will they buy the thing, or will we be plunged towards penury? Will it be full of grotesque typographical errors? Will someone calmly and unanswerably explain that the thing is just plain wrong? But the photocopier, provided it is not used merely as a substitute printing press, creates no such anxieties. You can slowly ease your "publications" onto the road like small buses, instead of hurling them into the sky like giant space rockets.

The photocopier, alas, has its own drawbacks. Computers and televisions exude an atmosphere of twenty first century cleanliness. The photocopier, on the other hand, seems anchored in the twentieth century, if not the nineteenth. It surrounds itself with dust and dirt, needs relentless fussing over by maintenance engineers, and in general goes about its business with all the calm self-sufficiency of a six-month-old baby. All that "improvements" to the design of the photocopier seem to mean is more pulleys, wheels, bells and whistles, and hence ways for the thing to break down and require a nappy-change or another cartridge or some such thing from the maintenance people. Worse, this general atmosphere of confusion and clutteredness tends all too frequently to be communicated to the final product, which is liable to involve splotches and smudges of all kinds. It can be very demoralising.

Because of all this, photocopiers are, in most people's minds, associated *only* with the creation of low quality, low volume back-up copies of documents where a record of content is everything, and where appearance counts for nothing. For most people photocopies mean dirty grey copies of letters for the mere files, or grubby and skewed approximations of vital newspaper articles or original pre-publication manuscripts. Photocopies mean staples and paper clips, punched holes and torn edges, all faithfully reproduced. *And they mean nothing else.*

Printing, on the other hand, is the real thing. Printing means everything carefully lined up and prettily illustrated. Printing means typesetting without errors, instead of typing with errors and covered in hand-done corrections. *Publishing* means printing. Who ever heard of "publishing" done with a mere photocopier? It's a flat contradiction!

So if the Libertarian Alliance relies on photocopying - and to many persons this fact is obvious at a glance, especially if they chance upon one of our more vapour-trail or splotch-mark infested products - then it must be an incorribly lightweight outfit. No circulation. No class. Forget it.

Now it isn't just that this kind of reaction annoys me, although it does of course. There is also the fact that if such criticism is unanswered it might impede the LA's progress, indeed it already does. For example, many people who could and should be writing regularly for the LA now choose not to, because in some subliminal way they imagine that writing for the LA is beneath them, or a bad career move, or just pointless. Potential donors to the LA desist from signing their cheques, because they fear that they'll merely be postponing the death of a doomed and futile enterprise.

Pro-printing fanatics argue that the great advantage of printing over photocopying is that printing provides economies of scale. Actually, the great advantage of the photocopier over the printing press is that the photocopier *doesn't* provide economies of scale, and hence spares you from the necessity of seeking those economies of scale by working on too big a scale and spending too much money.

ILLUSIONS OF MASS CIRCULATION

Many organisations are content to use the printing press to create the *illusion* of a huge circulation, rather than wasting any further money trying to make that illusion come true. Neither the IEA nor the ASI would work nearly so well if their publications were even suspected of not being printed, that is, of not being “real publications”. The ASI occasionally puts out folded A3 pieces in the LA manner, but I suspect that this is merely to save money on the production of things which for one reason or another they want to be able to say they have “published”, perhaps for fundraising reasons, but which are in other respects of little significance to them. These apart, they generally use their characteristic fat pseudo-governmental-report-with-a-glossy-cover style, and I think they're right. As for the IEA, you'd be amazed if you knew how tiny is the initial circulation of their publications, and the minuteness of their subscription list. The point is that you can change the course of history with only a tiny number of subscribers and a tiny initial sale, not that the IEA is a less than majestic organisation. But you try telling that to the rich people who pay the IEA's bills. Money from rich people would be unobtainable if all that they got for their money was photocopies which weren't even *pretending* to be widely circulated. ASI and IEA publications *have* to be printed.

The Libertarian Alliance, by contrast, began “publishing” by producing only a very tiny number of copies of its first publications, beyond those needed to service its subscribers, and so it has continued. “Publishing” means simply creating the artwork for the photocopier, and running off the first dozen copies. The author then tells us about any misprints he has observed, for he at least reads this brand new “publication” with some care. If the piece is short enough to fit on one sheet of A3 paper or less, and if it is a piece likely to be of less than completely specialist interest, then the first and probably the last burst of “mass production” ensues, for the subscribers. At this point a little bit of printing can make sense, but we still only produce as much material as we know will be needed, no more. The cost savings are immense, in money directly, and even more significantly, in space not spent accomodating all those cardboard boxes of undistributed material. (This last point can't be made too often - have you *seen* the IEA's warehouse? I have.)

Our artwork is very different from the artwork normally used when photocopying. It is - how shall I put it? - *artwork*. We work at it very hard, and spend fortunes on computing equipment to speed up and improve its production. The results are starting to look really rather presentable, downright *printed* in fact! And indeed, lots of people are fooled. For you see, the downmarket reputation of photocopying is the result of bad photocopies tending to be the only photocopies which are instantly recognisable as such. When a photocopier is behaving itself, which can happen quite often if you use one a lot and get to know its little ways, it can produce a result remarkably like printing, to the untrained and uninquiring eye. And as for those who

are not fooled, and who merely feast their eyes on our artwork and their minds on our beautiful verbiage, even they are unable to believe that we could spend so much time on a thing whose total first year circulation could be as little as two dozen. That? With all that illustrating, folding and stapling? With an ISBN number? For twenty copies? Never. At least five hundred and they must be hoping for thousands. Hm. Not a bad outfit. *They jump to this conclusion without even thinking about it.* Just like the IEA, we create the illusion of a larger immediate circulation than we truly achieve, in order not to upset those who are ignorant of how few people it takes to change the course of history. And now that you know how small is the initial circulation of some of our pieces, you also know how seriously we nevertheless take such publications.

We Westerners tell ourselves that we must learn from the manufacturing prowess of the Japanese. Well, the LA has been doing this for a decade, by supplying publications “just in time” to those who ask for them, by running these publications off when they are requested, and no sooner. I will add, for the benefit of *Marxism Today* readers, that the LA is a classic exercise in “Post-Fordist” production.

The best thing of all about the LA's publishing method is that when people submit stuff to us our only worry is whether we think it's good. If we approve of something, we bang out the artwork, do half a dozen copies, and then just lie back, relax, let nature take its course, and get on with the next one, and the next, and the next. No frantic press releases, unless we happen to be in a press releasing sort of a mood. No humiliating and pathetic sales drive, followed by bankruptcy. Just a group of calm, relaxed people, worrying only about how to keep up with the flood of excellent new pieces which our previous publishing achievements inevitably cause to be written. Also, we regularly take time off from publishing stuff by other people to publish further excellent pieces by our good selves. Try to imagine what a hideously impoverished list the LA's would be if each publication had to look like a potential best seller before we'd publish it, and if one in three of the things actually had to *be* best sellers. And what would such anxieties do to our own writing efforts?

It also helps greatly that we have not, for the time being, saddled ourself with the rigidities and deadline pressures of a regular periodical. Periodicals involve huge agonisings about how long everything is, and whether there is enough of some sorts of stuff and too much of other sorts. As things are we publish everything good, separately, and sell each publication to exactly those who want it.

The enthusiasts for libertarianism are not yet very numerous, but the best of them are determined to read widely and deeply about the subject. Very few such people will want to read everything produced by the Libertarian Alliance, or by our various comrades and rivals elsewhere in the libertarian movement. But because of the sheer number and range of LA titles it is a virtual certainty that they will find some at least of the LA's output to be of extreme interest and helpfulness. Many, when viewing the LA's publications catalogue for the first time, react as if being given a conducted tour by Alladin of his cave.

KEEPING GOING

Most important of all, because of our unwillingness *ever* to sink large sums of money into anything which we can't sell or otherwise make effective use of, we have managed to

keep going. I've never made an exact calculation of the total number of publications we have in fact distributed during the last decade, because, as I say, sales targets are not a big worry for us. That's the whole point of this piece. Number of titles yes, number of copies of each title sold, who knows? But when you consider that there are now well over two hundred LA publications, and that the number of each that has been "printed" averages several hundred, and in quite a few cases considerably more than that, you can see how it all starts to add up over the years. And each time an order for more stuff comes in, the purchaser is choosing from a longer list, and is accordingly likely to choose more.

Do not for one minute suppose that we who run the Libertarian Alliance are lacking in ambition, merely because, we are not insanely ambitious about any particular LA publication, or because you don't read about LA press conferences every other week. Chris Tame and I are two of the most ambitious individuals I personally know of. So far as we are concerned, the first two hundred LA publications - all of which, notice, are still "in print" - are merely our early fumbblings. Compared to the IEA or the ASI we regard ourselves as only recently having left the London School of Economics or St Andrews University. It takes time to construct a truly formidable institution, and then quite a bit more time for people other than you to realise that this is what it is. In the meantime, as I say, they will regard the secrets of your forthcoming success as mere evidence that you aren't doing it right, i.e. doing it the way everybody else tries to do it. Libertarians who dream of producing an uninterrupted stream of libertarian best sellers tell us that they are ambitious and that we are not. The truth is that we know how to be ambitious libertarian publishers and that they do not. One day soon I will do a graph of number of LA publications, plotted over time. It will be no mere straight line, I can tell you, more like a jet fighter taking off, and the rate of climb has only very recently become impressive. You ain't, in other words, seen nothin' yet.

MONEY

How do we make the money we do still need? The answer is childishly simple: we make it! By the same methods that other people make the money they make, so that they can pay for their particular enthusiasms. We work. What I do for a living is I sell the desktop publishing skills I have acquired while doing LA artwork.

Unlike the people at the IEA or the ASI we lack the skill of suggesting to fat cats that they will get the organisation they want, rather than the one we want. Besides, much of the point of the LA is to appeal to those without much money as well as those with it. If the thing was funded by a fat cat instead of by our lean and hungry selves, then this would show. Such things are hard to conceal. A "lightweight" appearance, in other words, has its uses.

On the other hand, the show being well and truly on the road, we now get numerous smaller donations from our subscribers, and these are starting to add up impressively, given that our costs are shaved to the bone and that £100 will get you a lot of LA activity. The good thing about these donations is that they are to the LA as it is and as it truly will be, scandals, photocopying and all. These good people are not telling us to do things differently; they are simply - bless them - telling us to keep up the good work. If you want people to support something, your best bet is to

start it up anyway, without support, thereby proving - if you can - that you are presiding over an enterprise which can survive bad times as well as good ones and is accordingly worth supporting. You only get "support" in this world if you can prove yourself able to survive without it. No doubt the IEA and the ASI had their plans all worked out for if absolutely no one came up with any money.

FAME AND INFAMY

I have said that you can't get rich as a libertarian publisher, and this is true in the sense that you cannot get rich by selling libertarian publications. On the other hand, you *can* get rich, in this age of globe spanning electronic gadgetry, by selling *yourself*, or so I persist in thinking. In addition to my ambitions for the LA, I also want to become a broadcasting celebrity. Now this may not happen, but on the other hand it just might. This is not a piece of writing about how to get famous, but it *is* about the *economics* of being a libertarian activist, so it is worth at least including here that fame can have big economic consequences. So, more to the point, can infamy.

The hope of riches is an economic fact in its own right. Hope justifies "investment" in the meantime, even if the hope ends up being unfulfilled. It is also worth noting that the very things that, at first, cause the libertarian message to be ignored by the media (it's too dangerous and scandalous and counter-consensual) are the very things that might later cause it to be greatly talked about. There is already, as I say, a very interesting story to be told about what libertarianism is doing to the Conservative Party, and it is only a matter of time before this story breaks.

DESIGN

Before I end I'd like to say something about graphic design.

Basically graphic design is not that important. If you are a libertarian and you want to publish true and interesting things, it is sufficient that *you* should like your publication style, that you are *content* to sustain it indefinitely, and that you can *afford* to sustain it indefinitely. If others think it ugly and unsuitable, no matter. What counts is that you should at least have a regular style of some kind, and that it should be your own and be instantly recognisable. You should definitely *try* to make your publications look beautiful. But if only you think you've succeeded, that is sufficient.

The IEA and the ASI both have highly individual graphic styles. The LA has followed their lead not by copying their styles but by evolving an equally unique style of its own. I've already alluded to the spectacularly wasteful way the ASI has with paper, which goes as far as only using one side of it. The idea is to make themselves and their publications look fat and substantial, and for journalists to be put off from actually reading it all and instead to be thoroughly intimidated and to print the ASI's press releases verbatim. Drop an ASI report on your foot and it could hurt you. A piece of exactly the same length, but published by the LA, would float through the air like a leaf.

The IEA spent literally decades decorating its publications, no matter what the topic, with a bunch of Georgian houses where they used to live years ago, but which they long ago vacated. There'd be this "Hobart Paper" on something like the horribleness of agricultural subsidies, and instead of a picture of horribly subsidised agriculture such as all other

publishers in our galaxy would use - including the LA incidentally - what does the IEA put on the front? Right. Georgian houses. Total insanity. Only the IEA would do this. And there you have it! It's *instantly recognisable* total insanity. Ah, there goes the IEA! My god, another? They must be doing well.

By all means fool around with your style in the early days, until you have it looking exactly the tasteless and crackpot way you want it to look. Don't overdo the standardisation to begin with - or at all, I'd say - unless of course you happen to be the kind of person who likes standardisation to be overdone. Allow yourself to home in gradually on your preferred style. But once you have the style in your grip, you should - surprise, surprise - *stick to it*. Beyond a certain point, physical appearance becomes a metaphor for intellectual conviction. People who produce a rather bizarre looking product which is nevertheless full of desirable material, and who keep on producing it for the next forty years, are the inheritors of the publishing earth. Those who keep changing their plumage in a desperate effort to impress merely communicate that they have so far failed to impress, or else why the changes? You can't build up a following for something if you keep altering it.

Effective written propaganda presents itself serviceably rather than beautifully, with rather old fashioned lettering and a general absence of the latest aesthetic games. Which would you rather read, an ugly publication full of interesting writing, or an impeccably stylish publication full of banal nonsense? The British left is now awash with Macintosh computers but it has nothing to say with them that is new or exciting, so instead left wing *design* has suddenly become very new and exciting. I've already referred to "Post-Fordism", which is one of the slogans of the so-called "New Times" project, being run by the British Communist Party and its journal *Marxism Today*. This silly enterprise consists (a) of admitting that capitalism is right and socialism wrong, and (b) of disguising the obviousness of this ludicrously belated discovery with a hurricane of multi-coloured graphic bullshit more appropriate to a newly opened underwear shop in the plaza of a mainline railway station.

I hope soon to be rubbishing New Times at greater length in another LA publication. It's actually rather more complicated and sinister than I've made it sound. We also hope, some time between now and the dawn of the next millennium, to be publishing a useful piece on the same topic by Marc-Henri Glendening. All that remains to be sorted out is some dozen or so footnotes, so it shouldn't take him more than five years to finish the job. Glendening treats New Times much more seriously and respectfully than I will, and I rather fear that he thinks we libertarians ought to worry about how pretty it all looks. This, I believe would be to confuse *intellectual* "sexiness" with visual frippery, and would be a shocking waste of time and money. On the other hand, if ace graphic designers choose to become libertarian activists and to publish banal libertarian publications decorated in the latest style, we can't stop them, can we?

More seriously, the Institute of Economic Affairs has recently been displaying distressing signs of aesthetic adequacy. So where does *that* leave my theory about the inversely proportional relationship between beauty and intellectual power? Well, until now I've ignored the whole vexed question of the hideous succession crisis that now racks the IEA, and its recent rapid decline from being a leader of academic debate to a mere intellectual camp fol-

lower of the suit wearing classes, and political campaigning headquarters for its new director. Having originally been a prime *cause* of such things as the Adam Smith Institute, the IEA is well on the way to being merely one of the less interesting of the ASI's numerous consequences. That's a different argument. The point I want to make here is merely that the aesthetic downs and ups of the IEA precisely reflect its underlying ups and downs as a would-be intellectual powerhouse.

Once you've got *your* house style established, the only big changes from then on should be in finding ways of deploying it more cheaply, efficiently and effectively, thus releasing scarce time and brain space to apply to that which matters most, which is what your products say. The major benefits of "desktop publishing" to the Libertarian Alliance have been not beauty, which as I say is largely in the eye of and for the benefit of the first beholders, but textual compression, speed and cheapness. Given that the LA's "printing" costs have always been low, DTP has made the LA a very, very cost effective organisation. The next step will be to privatise the world's postal services, because postage costs are now our biggest headache.

WE KNOW WHAT WE ARE DOING

The world's libertarians can't be expected to copy everything the LA does. We all have our particular mixtures of problems and opportunities which means that many of the LA's procedures are untransferable. But many of the LA's problems and opportunities are shared by libertarians generally. If other libertarians do things differently to the way we do them, that's partly because we are right about how we approach the common libertarian task and they are wrong. And part of the purpose of this pamphlet is to persuade fellow libertarians to change their ways for the better.

But if you tell people what you do and why it works so well, they are liable - fools that they are - to ignore you. They run their own operations, rather than humbly serving yours, so that they can decide things for themselves, and find things out for themselves. What I'm mostly doing here is selling the Libertarian Alliance to its potential subscribers, writers, collaborators, donors, distributors, media allies, and so on. My target readership for this is not really those people who might, if only they had the sense, learn from the LA's example how to run their own libertarian publishing ventures better. If such persons do pull their socks up by paying attention to the above items of wisdom that will be a nice bonus, but the people I really want to impress with this are those whose activities are part of, or are complementary to, the LA.

To put it bluntly, my message is that we in the LA know what we are doing, and are very good at it. If you are helping the LA, you are associating yourself with an organisation with a notable past, a substantial present, and a very impressive future indeed.

Anyway I like bragging about the LA and about how splendid it is. Institutions thrive because those running them are tremendously enthusiastic about them and have to try very hard to talk or think about anything else. The LA is that sort of institution, run by enthusiasts, thriving. Those who are repelled by such drumbeating will have stopped reading this long ago and that's no problem for me, for reasons I've already explained. You too must now stop reading, because I've finished. Don't worry too much about any withdrawal symptoms. There'll be plenty more of these.