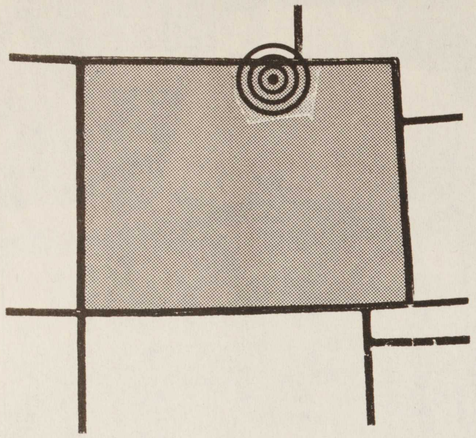
TRUE OPH STORIES: COLORADO



Fort Collins libertarians are creating a new political map of their city. Here's how they use Operation Politically Homeless to accomplish the task.

by Mary Margaret Glennie
as told to Steve Smith

The first time we used *Operation Politically Homeless* was July 4th this past summer. It was incredibly successful. We had a large number of inquiries and a large number of people who put their dot in the libertarian sector.

Since then we've taken it to other events. One was at Colorado State University during registration week. We also used it at the New West Fest, which is one of the biggest events in Fort Collins. It's a major street event and it also produced many inquiries.

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We've tried many different ways to communicate to the public. *Operation Politically Homeless* has a clear-cut goal, and that is to create an awareness that there is more to politics than left and right. Now among libertarians this is a "well, of course" idea. But it is not "well, of course" to the general public.

What I've found is that it's hard to discuss a different political direction unless there is first an awareness that there are other political views. So I use

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Operation Politically Homeless to create that awareness that there are other options besides being labeled left or right or conservative or liberal.

I've conducted an experiment where I've asked people, after they've taken the test, "Do you think this accurately reflects your political feelings?" People routinely say yes. This tells me that the questions are well worded.

Operation Politically Homeless is extremely useful for helping people discover that they are libertarians and that there are other people they can identify with. It's a good identifier and a non-threatening one.

One thing we did in Fort Collins was to write the Quiz questions out on a large poster so people could walk by and read them before taking that big step of talking to us. Large numbers of people do just that and that's OK. Some people will walk past you, some will take the Quiz and put their dot on the board, some will keep their score to themselves and some will simply read it and think about it. All of those reactions are OK because the goal, again, is to create awareness that there is a place for libertarians and that libertarians believe in both economic freedom and personal freedom.

Another thing we're doing is keeping representations of each event. We cover our map with a plastic sheet. At the end of the event we take the sheet off and label it with the event and the dates. We're creating a demographic picture of Fort Collins that lets us keep track of what types of people are at what events. So far, the percentage of people scoring libertarian was highest at the 4th of July event, the campus was lowest and the New West Fest was

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in the middle. We can also track our progress over time, say from one July 4th to the next July 4th.

Operation Politically Homeless has been very useful. We're extremely pleased.

Mary Margaret Glennie is the prime mover behind Freedom Now, an effort to create a libertarian community in Fort Collins, Col., by persuading other libertarians to move there. She may be reached at 1317 Lakewood Dr., Fort Collins CO 80521.

TRUE OPH STORIES: CALIFORNIA

by Michael McCarthy

We registered seven Libertarians, added 35 people to our mailing list, quizzed 150, and passed out lots of libertarian literature at the Castro Valley Fair. The happy surprise of the weekend turned out to be how easy it was to get libertarians to work the booth, and how much they enjoyed it.

From the people I called I was able to sign up 15 people to help. I attribute this to two things: We were asking them to do something specific, not just attend a planning meeting. And when I told them we would be handing out the *World's Smallest Political Quiz*, they knew they would have something to do besides sit there and feel dumb.

Almost everybody stayed longer than

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their two-hour stints, too. They stayed three, four, five hours. Some came back the next day, without being asked. Why? They were having fun!

To get lots of colored dots up on the board early, we were fairly aggressive about asking people to take our Quiz. When we hit 100 dots we relaxed some, letting people browse before "attacking" them. This produced a higher percentage scoring libertarian.

Just under a third of the Quiz takers scored libertarian. We found only Democrats in the liberal quadrant; a mixture in the authoritarian quadrant (including a grandmotherly type who was rattled to find herself down among the Stalinists, insisting it was impossible because she was a radical leftist); mostly Republicans but also some Democrats in the conservative quadrant; and the expected mix of party registration in the centrist region. In the libertarian quadrant we got a mix including many independents, non-voters and those generally disgusted with politics. (When someone refused the Quiz on the grounds he hated politics, I'd say, "Then you're probably libertarian" — and it was almost always true.)

Post-Game Analysis (thanks to Michael Chandler for this):

- Put the Libertarian sign high and prominently displayed.
- Downplay red-white-blue themes, as some connect this with super-patriot

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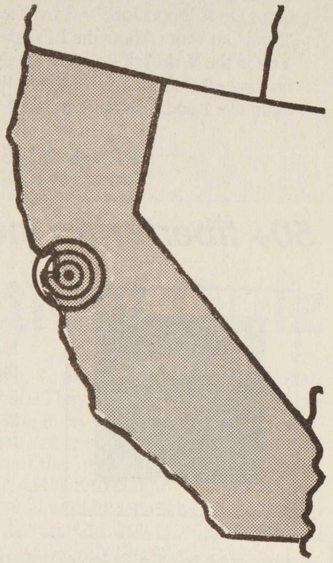
right-wing groups.
- Give the Nolan Chart sign the most prominence. We found it the most important single element in getting people to understand that we were taking a survey. There was also the reassurance that lots of people had already taken it (the bandwagon effect).
- For handouts we had political literature by the score, also scratchpads with free-market and libertarian slogans ("I Love Capitalism"; "Free the China 1 Billion," etc.) and the local Libertarian Party phone number.
- Ask people to fill out a *survey*; *quiz* has negative connotations in booth work (it works fine on the card itself).
- Keep the Quiz they fill out — don't let them walk away with their results. Give them a fresh card. Keep the filled-in cards for post-game analysis.
- We like the idea of a poster listing prominent people who share our philosophy. Divide it by types: Historical (Jefferson, Locke), Economists (Hayek, Friedman, Buchanan), Writers (Heinlein), Activists (Karl Hess, Russell Means), Entertainers (Jimmie Walker), etc. Don't run the libertarian thought police on your suggestions — you are looking for people well-respected in their fields who share important elements of the freedom philosophy. You want people who, had they taken your Quiz, would finish in the libertarian quadrant — not necessarily only those who would have scored 100-100.
- You might also consider a list of prominent people on the world scene and what makes them *not* libertarian: the South African government, Stalin, Hitler, the old men of China,



etc. Balance left-wing and right-wing. Throw in a few local surprises who fail our test on an important issue, where that failure makes people stop and think about the use of force.
- Keep track of the most popular questions you get from people. Analyze them and come up with good Bite-Size responses. We got questions like: How could the minimum wage cause job loss? How would you run the country with no taxes? You're not just going to open the borders and let as many people as want to come in, are you? You must find a way to give them an intriguing, stimulating short answer that makes them want to find out more. Don't get into a debate, lecture or lengthy argument.
- The most popular "Yes" question on the Quiz: "Europeans should pay for their own defense." There's a lot of hostility out there on this one. Most common disagreements with the libertarian position: the draft, taxes and drugs. Also immigration. One guy said emigration was fine, he just opposed immigration; presumably all the emigrants can swim around in the middle of the ocean.

Michael McCarthy is a libertarian living in Castro Valley, Cal.