

Harry Browne Tries to Tackle Abortion

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Staff Writer

On April 18, Libertarian Party presidential candidate Harry Browne visited our campus and spoke in Phillips Auditorium. When I heard he was coming I racked my brain for an intelligent question to ask him if he decided to entertain inquiries after his presentation. About an hour before his speech an idea hit me. I knew I had to ask him a tough question about abortion (he is pro-abortion and I, like the great majority of Hillsdale students, believe that abortion should be outlawed). After skimming his profile in the *Collegian*, the question came to me about thirty minutes later. I was so sure it would trap him with his own words that I began to pat myself on the back.

During the presentation, however, Harry Browne began to impress me. Browne, a tall, thin, white haired man of 62 appeared to be the prototypical successful businessman that he is. He spoke eloquently and logically about the need to reduce government and repeal the income tax. I found myself agreeing with almost everything that he said. But, alas, he avoided the abortion issue. His speech ended to great applause and the floor was opened for questions. By this time, however, I had decided not to ask the question in this open forum, where I could not debate with him freely, but rather to wait and ask him one on one.

As I approached him after the Q and A period, I determined to be tough and make sure that he did not leave without directly answering my question. I looked him in the eye, introduced myself and said, "I'd like to ask you a question about your posi-

tion on abortion." Immediately, he began to answer, but I had to cut him off and complete my question. I could not let him get away with a pat, political reply. Our complete dialogue follows.

Aaron Streett: In our college newspaper you stated that abortion is wrong. Why is abortion wrong if it is not murder?

Harry Browne: I personally believe that abortion is the taking of a life.

(When he admitted this I knew he had lost the battle.)

AS: You also stated that you would leave the abortion issue to the states. Then surely some states would allow abortion, which you believe is murder.

(He then evaded my assertion.)

HB: I just believe that we should take the federal government out of the abortion issue. Everything the federal government has become involved in, it has corrupted. Believe me, if the federal government stays involved in the abortion issue, within ten years we will have men having abortions.

(I couldn't let him soften me up with humor. I had to press the issue.)

AS: So the federal government should not step in and protect life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness if a state legalizes murder?

HB: Well, there is a difference between abortion and murder. Ninety-nine percent of Americans believe murder is wrong, while a majority of people believe abortion is morally permissible.

AS: So the federal government should not act to ban abortion until there is a public consensus?

HB: Right. The government uses force, and it should not be allowed to force people to go against what they believe. It is our job, in-

dividually, to persuade people not to make what we perceive as a wrong choice.

AS: So to be philosophically consistent, if a state legalized the murder of children under three years of age because there was a public consensus on the issue within the state, then the federal government should not step in and overturn the law?

(At this point, his wife actually nudged him and said, "It is time to go, honey," or something to that effect. I wonder if this was just a coincidence or a plan Mr. and Mrs. Browne have worked out to help Mr. Browne avoid embarrassing situations. Nonetheless, he continued the dialogue.)

HB: I don't think that (i.e., a state legalizing the murder of children under three) will ever happen.

(I had to counter this evasion.)

AS: People in the 1860s did not believe that abortion would ever be legalized.

HB: Mm Hm. (Long pause) Well, I guess I'll just cross that bridge when I get there. Like I said, there are no happy solutions to the problems.

I began to sense that he was a little flustered and slightly unhappy that he could not adequately answer my questions and objections. Besides, many other people were waiting anxiously to talk to him, so I shook his hand, thanked him, and left the auditorium.

As I walked back to my dorm I pondered our conversation. I couldn't help thinking that no matter how bad the other candidates are, I could not vote for a man who, if elected, would not intervene to stop millions of murders (abortions) he knew to be taking place. Can we as responsible voters support a man who believes that law is based on public consensus rather than a transcendent moral code?

Essay

WILLIAM SAFIRE

The Nader Factor

WASHINGTON

Say what you like about Ralph Nader, he is an American authentic: iconoclastic, fearless, media-savvy, often wrongheaded, but — as the man responsible for safety devices like air bags — a public citizen who has saved thousands of lives.

Come November, the original consumer activist could possibly be saving Bob Dole in California. Next Tuesday Nader will be chosen candidate for President on the Green Party's line, lending the power of name recognition to this agglomeration of environmentalists, vegetarians and consumerists.

Don't laugh. The Los Angeles Times poll shows him already pulling 7 percent of the vote from Bill Clinton and Ross Perot, and the White House is alarmed. California is essential to the President's reelection. Clinton has been to California more times than Warren Christopher has been to Syria. The President knows that every vote for Nader would come out of Clinton's lead.

That's what has the contingency-fee lawyers' lobby in such a sweat. Those trial lawyers all but own Clinton. They have been among his big-

gest contributors from the start, and Clinton regularly double-crosses his own party to protect their big fees. He vetoed a bill to curb stockholder suits (which the Democratic chairman, Chris Dodd, helped override) and is preparing to veto the bipartisan tort reform that the Democrat Jay Rockefeller won Senate cloture on yesterday. Clinton will protect those contingency fees till the last dog dies.

The only person as close to the heart of trial lawyers as Bill Clinton is Ralph Nader. His consumerism has long been the lawyers' gravy train. Nader inveighs, the lawyers sue; he gets principled satisfaction, they get filthy rich.

White House operatives are asking the lawyers: Why can't you get Nader off the ticket in California? Doesn't he realize he's helping Dole, and Dole wants a cap on your multi-million-dollar settlements?

"I don't just hear from trial lawyers," said Nader over a bowl of oatmeal with skimmed milk yesterday. "I'm getting calls from members of Congress and all sorts of emissaries. But I'm in this campaign to stay. Only proves I let the chips fall where they may."

At 62, Nader now has iron-gray hair, but his familiar face retains its boyish asceticism. "I know I can't win. This is to break the paradigm, to end the two-party duopoly."

What about Ross Perot, who de-duopolized our political system in 1992, and — to White House delight and G.O.P. dismay — backhandedly announced his 1996 availability the other day? "Perot doesn't go deep enough," says Nader of the billionaire activist-come-lately. "His is more a protest than a movement, and it's too knee-jerk anti-government. There's been a backlash to that, in defense of government, from the Homestead Act to the G.I. Bill."

Forget fund-raising: "I'll get on the air free, people can make tapes, pass them around." Nor will Nader adopt the platform of the Green Party, though its stand for same-sex marriage would boost his ratings in Northern California: "Not interested in gonadal politics." Nor will he be smoked out on such issues as immigration or affirmative action, preferring his own turf: restraining corporate power, term limits, public campaign financing, product safety and

"a new model of electoral politics."

This early opponent of Nafta thinks Perot will run and not do as well as last time, and that Buchanan may bolt the Republican Convention but will not try to start his own party, looking instead to a takeover of the G.O.P. in harder times. Good punditry.

Will the Nader factor make a difference this fall? Only if the election is tight in California and only if the Green Party gets on the ballot, as it expects to, in Maine, Colorado, New Mexico and a dozen other states.

Republicans worry about giving Ross Perot equal status in the Presidential debates, which built him up to Bush's detriment last time out. If Nader or any other lefty were to become a factor, the G.O.P. could insist on a four-way debate (with Perot cutting into Dole's support and Nader cutting into Clinton's) — or offer to limit the debate to Dole and Clinton. Which Clinton, who needs Perot, would probably turn down. Which would be fine with Dole, whose debating style is unsafe at any speed.

No wonder Clinton wants his contingency-fee crowd to twist Nader's arm to get out of the race. □

Niggling Clinton in California.

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National News

Campaign Diary

GAYS ON AGENDA OF 'PEROT' PARTY: Issues pertaining to Gay people will be among the topics discussed June 1-2 in Los Angeles at the first annual state conference of the Reform Party of California, according to openly Gay party official Jim Mangia.

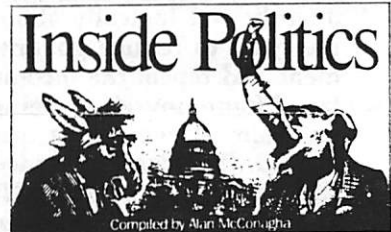
The Reform Party was created last year by supporters of 1992 presidential candidate Ross Perot as a means of placing Perot or someone who supports Perot's political agenda on the ballot in California for the 1996 presidential election. Former Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm, a sup-

porter of Gay civil rights, will be the keynote speaker at the conference. Mangia, the party's secretary, has said he will urge Gay voters to consider supporting the Reform Party's presidential nominee as an alternative to President Clinton (D) and Republican candidate Bob Dole. The party is scheduled to nominate a presidential candidate this summer. Many of the Reform Party's members are urging Perot to seek the party's nomination.

— Lou Chibbaro Jr.

The Washington Times

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Buchanan's reaction

Pat Buchanan comments on Bob Dole's resignation from the Senate:

"I thought it was bold, and I thought he did it in a very moving and a very impressive way when he stood up and made that statement and separated himself from an institution where he served . . . 36 years."

But Mr. Buchanan, interviewed on Oliver North's radio show, added: "If the Republican Party walks away from its social and cultural and moral agenda . . . it is going to lose its soul . . . and you'll see something new come into being."

Mr. Buchanan's remarks were reported by Talk Daily.