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Libertarian preaches conversion

■ A long-time Libertarian, Tonie Nathan steps up to a platform undefined by traditional party lines

By Jack Clifford
Oregon Daily Emerald

The idea of politicians meddling in citizens' lives resonates negatively with the various political parties in one form or another. For local Libertarian party member Tonie Nathan, that objection is the essence of her political stance.

"I believe if the government would get much smaller, that would solve a great number of our problems," Nathan said. "People are going to do whatever they want to do. You have to teach people how to be responsible."

Nathan, fresh off a trip to California for the Libertarian Party's national convention, talks today to the Rubicon Society, a local moderate Republican organization. The Rubicon Society meets weekly to discuss politics and inviting Nathan isn't an endorsement of the Libertarians' platform, just a chance to hear a different opinion.

"We want to be a little more open-minded," Rubicon Chair George Alvergue said. "She's going to try to convince us that she's right and I just happen to disagree."

The noon gathering at the Pearl Street Ice Cream Parlour is in no way combative, and Alvergue praises Nathan for her "well-versed" approach to politics. Nathan, for her part, admits that she's looking for a few good members from both major parties to switch sides.

"I think that a lot of people don't believe in the Republican or Democratic parties," Nathan said. "I think they should look around for someone they do believe."

In the case of the Libertarian Party, that someone would be presidential candidate Harry Browne, who was named the party's choice to represent it on July 2 at the Anaheim, Calif., conven-

tion. Browne, who also ran for president as a Libertarian in 1996, will be on all 50 states' ballots. Art Olivier was selected by convention members as the party's vice-presidential candidate.

During his acceptance speech, Browne echoed Nathan's comments by saying, "Only Libertarians recognize that you are the rightful owner of your life — not Al Gore or George W. Bush."

Nathan was the Libertarian vice-presidential candidate in 1972, a spot that she didn't really campaign for or expect. In fact, Nathan, a University grad in journalism, attended the Libertarian Party's first-ever national convention in Denver as a local radio reporter working on a story about third parties.

While roaming the floors talking with attendees — Nathan said that the first convention attracted

just 89 people, while the 2000 convention attracted approximately 1,000 — she was asked to run for the party's vice-presidential slot.

Delegates elected her to the John Hospers ticket and Nathan went on to become

the first woman in U.S. history to win an Electoral College vote when Virginia's Roger MacBride, a Republican, cast his vote for her instead of President-elect Richard Nixon.

"To be a Libertarian, you have to have a very benevolent sense toward people," Nathan said.

She said that the Libertarian Party's platform is fiscally conservative, but socially liberal. The party is the third largest in the nation, with more than 300 members in office, mostly at city and state levels.

Although the theme of Nathan's speech to Rubicon is "Why Republicans should vote Libertarian this year," she also had a few things to say about the current political climate in Eugene, specifically in reference to anarchists. Nathan said in particular that group is sometimes confused with Libertarians in peo-

Nathan's speech to the Rubicon Society

Tonie Nathan talks to the Rubicon Society today at noon at the Pearl Street Ice Cream Parlour, 1313 Pearl Street.

The Rubicon Society is a local moderate Republican group.

Nathan was the Libertarian vice-presidential candidate in 1972.

She was the first U.S. woman to receive an Electoral College vote.

ple's minds.

Libertarians don't consider all corporations to be destructive on society, Nathan said, and unlike some anarchist factions, the Libertarian Party does not agree with any initiation of force or destruction of property.

"We're willing to co-exist with any people and any groups as long as they don't tell others how to live their lives," Nathan said.

Nathan said that the November presidential election is "going to be unusual" and that the polls she has seen show that the American people would like to see a third party emerge on the national scene.

"Personally I think the country would be better off with a Libertarian president," Lane County Republican Party chairman Jeff Hoyt said. "But I think George Bush is a better candidate than Tonie is giving him credit for."

Hoyt said he considers Nathan a friend and that he agrees with her on a lot of political issues. Despite a general lack of recognition as a threat to the current two-party system, Nathan said that along with the Libertarians, she will just continue to strive for what she said she thinks is the right conclusion.


Step one of that goal is to sway the moderate Republicans in attendance at today's Rubicon meeting.

"They should consider voting their conscience instead of voting for the candidate that they think is going to win," Nathan said, referring to Bush, the Republican choice for president.

"If they believe that government is too big, they should vote their consciences ... [because] we believe that small government is beautiful."


"I believe if government would get much smaller, that would solve a great number of our problems ... You have to teach people how to be responsible."

Tonie Nathan
Libertarian member



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