

Libertarian Sightlines

As So Many Candidates Cloud the Issues, One Party Has Some Interesting Viewpoints

By Marc-Yves Tumin

As I strolled through Union Square Park last week, I was smiling at how everyone was preparing for Halloween. Shoppers were bustling around the greenmarket searching for the right apples; the smell of fall was in the air; toddlers squealed in the playground; protesters were handing out broadsides for an antiwar march in Washington, DC; even the squirrels listened intently. And as the activists harangued folks about liberty and human rights, I wanted to ask them about a few contradictions in their agenda: What about the welfare/warfare state, for example? What do libertarians say?

It's amazing how many people aren't even sure what libertarianism is. They confuse it with liberalism or suspect it's a form of left- or right-wing radicalism. I became familiar with libertarianism some years ago when I started reading Murray

Rothbard. He was a true individualist, a classical liberal, sometimes called the most extreme form of conservatism. I didn't always agree with his positions but found them thought-provoking.

With that in mind, I interviewed Jak Karako, the Manhattan Libertarian party candidate in the 66th State Assembly District. Karako is the child of Sephardic Jews from Spain. He was born in Turkey, attended a British high school and has an MBA. He came to this country 12 years ago, makes his living as a financial reporting systems specialist and has his own tango school.

"Basically, our party puts the individual in the highest category, not minority, not majority, but the individual has the most power," he said. "We classify ourselves as socially tolerant but fiscally conservative, and we don't believe that government has the answers to all the problems.

"The traditional left and right

would not classify us. Sometimes we find ourselves on the left and sometimes on the right. How we place ourselves on the political spectrum is authority vs. freedom."

What about decriminalizing narcotics? "There should be no politics in medicine and science," he declared. "We should legalize medical marijuana. You don't see beer sellers and cigarette sellers fighting for corners to sell their product. The history of America will change if we stop the war on drugs."

How about the war on terrorism? "We're a hundred percent against the draft," he continued. "Unless we're under specific threat, we should not engage in military confrontation."

How do libertarians deal with crime? "We do not classify any activity between consenting adults as crime; that includes sex and prostitution," he said. On the other hand, "We are strong supporters of the Second Amendment. When you enact gun-control laws, the law-abiding citizens are the only ones who abide by them."

What of immigration? "We have a welfare system [that attracts mass immigration]," he said. "There should be a period of transition to phase that out. With

peaceful intentions, people should be allowed to cross the borders."

Libertarians "don't believe in corporate welfare or redistribution of wealth. It's an economic reality that minimum-wage laws create unemployment. We are not against the poor, but the nonprofit sector does a hell of a good job on welfare. The government wastes money."

They are business-friendly, according to Karako. "Repeal the multiple income taxes and multiple barriers to doing business," he declared. "We have to create a fertile environment for business to come back to America. Business licensing and registration [are counterproductive]."

As for taxes, "Let's take [reform] one step at a time. We could start by repealing the state income tax and the city income tax. Let's start implementing user fees over income tax.

What about racial quotas? "We're against affirmative action," he emphasized. "It categorizes people. Individuals should be individuals."

Lastly, libertarians want Uncle Sam out of the classroom: "The Constitution does not say that education is the government's function." That's a heady cocktail. All in all, the libertarians add spice to the hot mulled cider of autumn. ■

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