

Tanstaaf!

there ain't no such thing as a free lunch

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TLP ExCom Meet Flops -- Mail Ballot Produces Changes

We tried to hold an Executive Committee meeting at Ralph Kirkland's on July 5, but we fell one short of a quorum. The three present (Roger Bissell, Ralph Kirkland, and Mary Walker) discussed possible changes in TLP policy with Phil Carden and with Perry Boling and Jim Forrester of West Tennessee.

We decided to try to conduct the business by mail ballot. As late as three weeks after being sent out, they were still not all returned. The following changes, however were made by majority vote of the Executive Committee:

(1) We approved correcting the 1981 TLP Convention minutes to reflect the fact that the Convention passed an amendment to Article III, Section 2 of the TLP Constitution, giving the power to set reasonable membership fees to the State Executive Committee (not the State Convention, as erroneously recorded by acting secretary Roger Bissell).

(2) We approved and added to the Bylaws a plan for funding statewide LP projects which would allow more participation at all levels in the process of deciding how much (and whether) money is to be spent.

(3) We approved and added to the Bylaws a plan for commissioned fundraising, in order to train and provide incentives for fundraisers and to raise funds for the TLP.

(4) We approved raising the allocation to Tanstaaf! of each members dues from \$6 to \$8, in order to offset rising costs of postage and printing.

(5) We approved requiring State Conventions to be run "strictly on a self-supporting profit-making basis."

Three more changes have yet to be approved or rejected. Also, Phil and Roger are working on additional proposals having to do with formation, affiliation, and delegation (to the State Convention) of local LP groups.

Second Region 13 Meeting Discusses Future Campaigns, Organization

Twenty-five people from Region 13 (Tenn., Ala., Miss., Louis.) met in Tuscaloosa on July 18 and 19 to discuss a variety of issues. Tennessee was well-represented by Phil, Ralph, Roger, Bill McGlamery, and Wendell Hill. Mississippi sent one and Louisiana did not attend. The Alabamians were also holding their State Convention, which was attended by the three National chair candidates, Alicia Clark, Kent Guida, and John Mason.

We talked about possible controls for future LP presidential campaigns and decided a policy review committee and a (long-range) strategy committee were both desirable. We decided not to form a regional organization, but instead to remain affiliated in order to share ideas and solutions to our common problems. The Alabama folks agreed to come up with some cost proposals for a regional newsletter or journal.

There was some talk about holding a caucus of Region 13 state delegates and/or "Southern" delegates at the Denver Donvention, as well as a "Dixie LP Conference" in summer 1984. After discussing future campaigns and the importance of grass-roots campaigning, we decided to meet sometime this fall for our third regional meeting, whether or not the National decides to re-assign our states to different regions.

West Tennessee Notes

The July meeting of the West Tennessee Libertarians was held July 15 at the home of Perry Boling, for pot luck supper. At a brief business meeting, Shirley Lamar assigned names to volunteers to call in advance of every monthly meeting. Bill Riggins recorded the names of those who are willing and available to make speeches on libertarianism, or on concrete issues from a libertarian perspective; he plans to begin seeking speaking opportunities for these people. Bill Wingo, who writes the movie reviews in the BELL, was scheduled to address a discussion group at the local Unitarian Church on the River on Sunday, July 19, on the subject of libertarianism.

The August meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 19, 6:30 PM (pot luck supper) at the home of Jim and Maureen Danly, 8231 Georgetown Place, in Germantown, Tennessee. Their telephone number, for anyone needing directions as to how to get there, is 755-1074.

Perry reports that the Memphis city council seems to be "softening a bit in some respects." He explains:

A week ago, Glenn Raines, the budget committee chairman, asked me to have coffee with him, and discussed some of his concerns about trends and problems in government, and said specifically that maybe it was time to give some long, serious thought to whether or not the government really did have a role in transportation, or education. (!!!!) Don't know if he's sincere, or just trying to play up to me, but don't know why he'd want to do that. I suspect some of these officials are beginning to fear they're running down a blind alley, and would like some genuine alternatives.

Perry has also written letters to most of the Shelby County delegation in the legislature, asking them NOT to grant the power to impose a local gasoline tax to fund the MATA buses. He is continuing to push for cutting MATA back to the areas where there is a market for it, and allowing other forms of transportation to fill in the gaps. Here is the text of Perry's excellent letter:

Please let me take a few moments of your time to sum up a taxpayer's view of the MATA "crisis" and the recurring local demand for additional taxing authority as the "solution" to this and similar problems.

In a sense, the MATA problem is a microcosm of the situation existing with the entire city of Memphis budget -- irresponsible priorities.

On the city level, taxpayers are given the bogus alternatives of "a tax increase, or loss of vital, essential services." The reason this alternative is bogus is because the budget contains items which are not threatened with cuts, but which are clearly non-essential in terms of what the bulk of people wants and expects from government -- defense of life and property.

Consider also, in terms of priorities, the use to which the city plans for the money they did receive from the legislature -- the additional allocation from the increase in the state gasoline tax. City leaders went whining to Nashville, citing their need for this money to support MATA. Now that they've got it, that's not what they're going to use it for!

Similarly, the MATA leadership begged the City Council to restore their \$5 million grant to the city operating budget. The City Council did so, with the understanding that this would avert the very thing that precipitated this current issue -- the loss of night and Sunday bus service.

What are MATA's priorities, aside from providing themselves with sumptuous new facilities? Improved service does not appear to be one of them. Like the Post Office, their pledge to us is: less service at higher cost, like it or lump it.

MATA has been heavily subsidized for a number of years, and yet it remains basically an east-west service. Like so many other facets of city government, all roads lead downtown. If you're going there, you can get decent service. If not, you're out of luck.

Do you realize that only about 7% of the people in the city use the bus service? Why do you think that's the case? Granting a variety of reasons, I suggest that poor service ranks high among them.

Let me testify personally, as an ex-bus rider with 18 years of daily ridership. I quit using the bus to and from work when it was going to take me two hours to travel a one-way distance I could travel by car in twenty minutes, tops, during rush hour. People in Memphis have better things to do with their time than spend three to four hours a day riding the bus, or waiting for it!

Aid has been repeatedly sought for MATA in the name of "mass transit." Such a designation is worse than a misrepresentation, it is a JOKE. Anybody who can speak of a system with the capacity to serve less than 10% of the population as "mass transit" should go into writing fiction for a living.

This brings me to my final point. I am enclosing a copy of a paper I prepared earlier, "Some Observations on Mass Transit in Memphis." In it, you will note, I have nowhere advocated scrapping MATA, but rather to allow other forms of transportation to come into being to complement MATA, to fill in the gaps it is clearly unable to fill, to shore up MATA's weaknesses.

Urban sprawl is being blamed for much of MATA's problem. That need be no problem, if MATA is encouraged to live within its means, rather than given a permanent tap on taxpayer resources.

The leadership of MATA acknowledge that MATA operates only three routes that "break even." (Presumably to "make money" is beneath consideration! After all, there is always the taxpayer! This should give you the glimmering of an idea as to what is in store for the taxpayer, MATA-wide, in future years.)

Obviously, if MATA cannot even "break even" on most of its routes, it is attempting to render service where there is no market for it.

Let MATA be encouraged now to begin to reduce its scope of operations to those areas where there is a market and a need. Is this not more reasonable than forcing the whole body of Memphians to support a system that offers no value to over 90% of them?

Let the phased withdrawal of urban service be made up by voluntary car-pooling, shared taxi rides, van or jitney services, or feeder services to inner city bus pick-up points. Permit private companies to build bus shelters, rather than having the city do it, and sell advertising space therein.

If you like the sound of any of these ideas, bear in mind that most of them are presently impossible in Memphis due to restrictive city regulations. Does this not suggest the question to you: Is the city really interested in promoting a multi-faceted system of genuine MASS transit, or is it only interested in protecting its Sacred Cow, MATA, at any cost (to the taxpayer, of course!)?

Herein, then, lies the real danger, and the real fallacy, of the legislature's permitting "permanent funding" of MATA through an open-ended local taxing authority, sans referendum:

* You would be providing permanent funding for an entity that would serve 10% (being generous!) of the people at the expense of the other 90%. You would be institutionalizing "business as usual" on MATA, you would be saying to them, "You're doing a great job, go right ahead." Is this what you really want to say?

* You would be forever closing the door on the kind of variety and innovation I have suggested above and in the attached paper. Who needs new ideas, with a permanent stranglehold on the taxpayer to subsidize the status quo! If you like the ideas I have suggested, bear in mind that permanent funding to MATA will be their death blow. Is this what you want?

Just how far do you think the taxpayer can be pushed, in being forced to pay for services he neither needs nor wants? Where does it stop, this little game called "Hit the Taxpayer?"

Speaking as one taxpayer, but, I'm convinced, voicing the sentiments of many, I'm ready to start hitting back.

Sincerely,

Perry Boling, Jr.

(Editor's note: Boling for Memphis City Council in '83! Hey, Memphis LP'ers, I hope you realize what a great asset you have in Perry. He does his homework and he's not afraid to take a public stand on important issues. Emulate him!)

Mid-State Activism Continues at High Level

On Tuesday, July 7, Ralph, Roger, Phil and R.A. Brannon were among 23 speakers at a Metro School Board hearing (ostensibly) to see if there was public support for a property tax referendum (to give the schools more money than Council voted them). They decided that testimony by alphabet soup lobbying groups constituted "public support," so they called the referendum for September 3.

The next day Nashville was up in arms. The radio talk shows were flooded with anti-school and anti-tax-increase callers. Roger and R.A. got several invitations to speak on talk and call-in shows, and the Tennessean ran a beautiful front-page picture of R.A., cigar and "Tricky Dick" gesture and all! Several volunteers called as a result.

On Friday, July 24, we announced our tentative plans to sue the School Board and the County Election Commission in order to prevent the Sept. 3 referendum from taking place. Phil opined that the School Board's power to call the election was based on an unconstitutional delegation of taxing power by the state legislature. The Tennessean ran an extensive article on NTAC and the school tax controversy in the following Sunday edition. Several more volunteers called as a result.

On Wednesday, July 29, Ralph, Roger and R.A. (the Three R's?) spoke at a public hearing held by the Mayor's Commission on Crime. We pointed out a number of ways of cutting crime and the costs of the criminal justice system, including repeal and/or lowering the enforcement priorities of victimless crimes. We made use of Robert Poole's Cutting Back City Hall and William Burt's Local Problems, Libertarian Solutions.

On Monday, August 3, we held a public meeting of NTAC in the State House chambers to organize the defeat of the Sept. 3 referendum. It was attended by nine individuals and nine media people! Roger spoke, several volunteers signed up, \$95 was collected, and Roger and Phil answered a number of media questions (which ranged from sympathetic and genuinely interested to pointed, if not hostile). The 10 o'clock news coverage on all three stations, plus a front-page Tennessean article the next day, generated four more volunteers plus a meeting with Roger requested by 28th district councilman Rod Williams!

Our plans now are to get as many free voter registration lists as we can, go door to door with flyers in the areas where our strongest support is (to get \$ and volunteers), to call during the last two weeks in order to get out the "no" vote, and perhaps run ads in the Suburban papers. And to bask in the glory of victory, if possible! We may be able to squeeze in a last-minute report in the next Tanstaaf!, so stay tuned.

Roger is scheduled to appear on WPLN-FM's "Coffee Break" on Friday, August 7. Also, he is tentatively set to appear with the opposition ("Reach for Excellence") on a WKDF radio show on Sunday, August 16. The September issue of Nashville magazine, which comes out a week before the referendum, contains a "hot" interview of Roger in the "Pro-Con" feature, dealing with the property tax increase. More details next time!

Other Middle Tennessee Items

The MTLTP supper group July meeting was attended by 13 people, including Councilwoman Betty Nixon. We discussed the LP issue paper on "Women's Rights," as well as a number of local issues such as zoning and eminent domain. She presented R.A. with a laminated copy of the front-page with the above-mentioned picture. Great fun!

The August MTLTP meeting will be held 7 PM (6PM for dinner) at the Shoney's in Inglewood (3215 Gallatin Rd.). Our tentative guest is Charles Kimbrough, former president of the Nashville area NAACP. We plan to discuss the LP issue paper on "Poverty." Be with us!

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TANSTAFL
4415 Lone Oak Rd.
Nashville, TN 37215

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