

TO: Ed Crane  
Frank Robinson  
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FROM: Dave Nolan

SUBJECT: 1976 Election Strategy

Having at last recovered from the Ordeal at Dallas, I have finally gotten around to setting some thoughts on paper, regarding the 1976 Presidential Election. Having been appointed temporary chairman of the Presidential Election Committee, I am throwing out these early thoughts in the hope that they will stimulate responses from the recipients in time to allow me to firm up the proposals I will make at the ExecComm meeting on November 30th.

I would like to begin by saying that while I am entirely in agreement with Frank Robinson regarding the importance of Congressional races in 1976, I do not believe we should downgrade the importance of running a national ticket as well.

Like it or not, a Presidential/VP ticket is the only thing that will get us any visibility, nationwide. A national ticket may well draw funds away from Congressional candidates, insofar as the "pool" of already-committed libertarians is concerned, but it will also, I firmly believe, greatly increase the size of the pool by drawing in more people; on balance, I am confident that having a national ticket will result in more support, rather than less, for our Congressional candidates, by giving them a small slice of a much bigger pie, as opposed to a big slice of a small pie.

Furthermore, I think there are other benefits to local candidates in having a national ticket; it increases public awareness of libertarianism as a significant national movement, and allows joint appearances that can be used advantageously both for publicity and fund-raising.

So much for that. Now, onward to some analysis of where we stand, and what we can reasonably hope to accomplish in 1976.

To begin with, Kay Harroff's optimism notwithstanding, I do not believe we can win the Presidential election in 1976. Nor do I believe we can even put on a showing of the order achieved by George Wallace in 1968 (9.9 million votes).

However, I think we can realistically aim at establishing ourselves as a "major minor party," rather than "just another fringe group" like the various leftist parties... i.e. we can try to do on a national scale what the N.Y. party did with the Youngstein campaign in 1973.

To turn to specific numbers, what would we need to accomplish this? There are several ways to analyze the situation, as I see it, and each of them points to a nationwide vote total on the order of 500,000 to 1,000,000 votes as the minimum necessary if we are to break into the relative "big leagues."

One way of looking at it is to look at the leftist parties. Depending on how things stand regarding ballot laws in '76 (more on this later), the lefties might be able to draw about 250,000 to 500,000 votes between them in '76. Obviously, we want to outpoll them all together, if we are to convincingly set ourselves apart from them in the public eye.

Another yardstick is the American Party/American Independent Party. The AP ticket drew 1.1 million votes in 1972, down from 9.9 million in 1968. In '76, they will be lucky to draw even that many votes. Their leadership has been making fools of themselves lately; the two factions will probably be running competing tickets (which will divide their strength badly); and we will undoubtedly siphon off some of their support. So if we can pull on the order of a million votes, we should come in ahead of the Apes.

A third perspective. Since 1932, only six minor-party Presidential candidates have pulled more than 500,000 votes: Norman Thomas (Socialist) with 885,000 in 1932; William Lemke (Union) with 892,000 in 1936; Strom Thurmond (States Rights) with 1,176,000 in 1948; Henry Wallace (Progressive) with 1,157,000 in 1948; John Schmitz (American) with 1,081,000 in 1972--and, of course, George Wallace with 9.9 million in '68. All of these candidates, with the possible exception of Lemke, were taken seriously by the media and the public, and had some impact on the stands of major-party candidates and platforms, either when they ran, or in the long run.

So, any way we look at it, a showing of a million votes would be a significant number for us to pull--a worthy goal for us to aim at. And, depending on how successful we are at getting on the ballot in the various states, even a half-million would be a very respectable achievement.

But is a goal of 500,000 to one million votes realistic? I would say "yes," given certain provisos. First, I am assuming that the LP will continue to grow -- to perhaps 7,000 by the time of our nominating convention in the fall of '75, and to perhaps 20,000 by Election Day, 1976. Second, I am presupposing we can get on the ballot in at least one-third of the states, including at least one "biggie" like New York or California; this, I think, would give us a large enough electorate to get a half-million votes. For a million, I think we will have to get on the ballot everywhere, via a court decision requiring uniform national ballot requirements--something we should pursue. Finally, I am assuming adequate funds--\$500,000 to \$1 million, going by the old "dollar a vote" rule of thumb.

This latter point brings me to my first recommendation. I think it is very important that we accumulate a minimum of \$25,000 (and preferably double that) in a Presidential Election Fund prior to the 1975 nominating convention. If we can start with \$25,000 fourteen months in advance, I think there is a reasonable chance of raising a half million to a million dollars during the campaign.

Therefore, I hereby recommend the establishment of a special fund, the "Liberty '76 Fund," which will serve as a depository of contributions for the '76 LP Presidential race. This fund should be heavily promoted to the membership, starting right after this year's races are over, with a report on its status in every issue of LP NEWS; the announced goal should be \$25,000. Careful records should be kept of contributions, and all money and records turned over to the campaign organization of our nominee immediately following the nominating convention. Perhaps the money received could be invested in gold coins for the duration of the accumulation period, if this would be legal; if not, it could at least be put in a savings account where it would draw interest.

Onward. Assuming the above **provisos** can be met, what should we do between now and the campaign itself, to maximize our performance? (And incidentally, one million votes works out to only 1.2% of a projected 83 million votes to be cast in 1976; half a million is only 0.6%.)

Herewith, my recommendations:

- 1) A permanent Presidential Election Committee should be established at the ExecComm meeting in November. I would suggest Gary Greenberg as chairman, with myself, Frank Robinson and other interested parties as members.
- 2) This committee should have fairly narrow responsibilities. As I see it, its functions should be limited to the following:
  - a) Studying ballot requirements, formulating a strategy for attempting to get on the ballot in the potimal grouping of states, and working with the various state chairmen, to guide them in this pursuit; Gary Greenberg to co-ordinate;
  - b) Working to try to get a uniform national ballot in 1976; this might involve trying to get Congress to act, or a court case; I will handle this, if desired;
  - c) Co-ordinating efforts with Frank Robinson's LINC Committee (which, I am assuming, will be established at the same ExecComm meeting); Frank would serve as liaison;
  - d) Keeping the LP National ExecComm and state chairmen informed of what's going on;
  - e) Promoting and managing the "Liberty '76 Fund," as outlined above; perhaps Bob Meier could handle this;
  - f) Serving as a clearing-house for exchanges of information, and settling of conflicts (if they arise) between the pre-convention candidacies of various contenders for our nomination; all candidates, when they announce, should

be invited to appoint a representative to sit on the committee.

Each of these functions might well require the efforts of several people; for this reason, I would recommend that each function have its own subcommittee, headed by the appropriate member of the full committee; the full committee would consist of the subcommittee heads, plus candidate representatives, and would in turn be a subcommittee of the ExecComm--although not all Presidential committee members would have to be ExecComm members.

I would recommend a one-time appropriation of about \$2,000 to launch the Presidential committee, with approximately one-fourth to go to function "a" above, one-fourth to function "b," one-fourth to "e," and the remainder left in a general fund to handle the other functions. A similar sum, I assume, would be appropriated to the LINC committee.

That essentially covers my thoughts on this subject to date. Comments are welcome; I plan to present a formal proposal in November.

-/ David F. Nolan