

7-14-72

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Ed,

Due to the amount of work I see ahead of me in the near future, in the party, etc., I have cut short work on my house and will return to NY about the 27th of July, at which time I hope to meet with you to learn what's happening with you and the NY Party, and to get your reaction to the enclosed rewrite of my preamble and statement of principle proposal. I am very grateful for your invitation to the platform committee, etc., especially since, as you probably know, I regard NY as the state and city where the Libertarian Party has the best chance of achieving national recognition first, and perhaps in a very short time. I have been doing some thinking and homework since our convention, especially while following the Democratic convention, and I have reached the tentative conclusion that if the NY Party can meet the test of putting together a platform (especially the preamble) and organizing better than did the national convention, and if we can get a few sharp people to work full time, we can give the whole country one hell of a surprise in the mayoral election, and perhaps before.

I will be glad to go into the reasons for this in detail when I return, but for now I will mention a few brief points.

1. The mood of the country, and of NY city as the epitome of that, both on particular issues and emotionally. I can vouch for NY, since cab driving is the best job there is for keeping one's ear to the grass roots. It was stated as well as anywhere else during the Demo. convention and news analyses thereof—people are disturbed and angry about big, secretive, unresponsive and irresponsible government; lies and unfulfillable promises; taxation; economic chaos; and distortions of values; and they want the right to control their own bodies and lives. This last was stated in virtually those terms by the women's caucus at the Demo. convention, and though the specific issue was abortion, which is still very much alive in NY as an issue I think, people's feelings are running toward those terms to some degree on every issue; they are thinking of it more and more in those terms. And when you consider the spectacle of Larry O'Brien in the opening speech (and others at that convention in some degree) admitting that lies and unfulfillable promises by Democrats ("we", he said) are responsible in great part for the present public mood, and pleading with the convention not to make the same mistakes again, (so they'll trust us this year (!), you can see how serious and how far into the public this has gotten. He and the others on that score gave the Libertarian Party some outstanding campaign ammunition, and the course of the convention and news commentary on it was one big illumination of that.

One more thing on this point that is of paramount importance: the question of ethical argument in the political arena (e.g. distortions of values). If I remember correctly, Hospers made the serious mistake in his acceptance speech (among other such errors) of saying he would (and, I presume, by implication we should) stay away from ethical questions in the campaign when possible, keeping to strictly political issues. Answers to that were given long ago by Rand in, among other places, the introduction and first essay of "Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal".

"By their silence—by their evasion of the clash between capitalism and altruism—it is capitalism's alleged champions who are responsible for the fact that capitalism is being destroyed without a hearing, ... without any public knowledge of its principles, its nature, ... or its moral meaning."

"Of all the social systems in mankind's history capitalism is the only system based on an objective theory of values."

"The objective theory of values is the only moral theory incompatible with rule by force. Capitalism is the only system based implicitly on an objective theory of values—and the historic tragedy is that this has never been made explicit." (Italics mine-PH.)

"No social system (and no human institution or activity of any kind) can survive without a moral base." (Italics mine.)

"For those who do not fully understand the role of philosophy in political-economic issues, I offer—as the clearest example of today's intellectual state—some further quotations [from Britannica]...

—Few observers...find fault with capitalism as an engine of production. Criticism usually proceeds either from moral or cultural disapproval of certain features...—

"...the guiltiest men are those who, lacking the courage to challenge mysticism or altruism, attempt to bypass the issues of reason and morality and to defend...—capitalism—on any grounds other than rational and moral." (Italics mine.)

I could go on in that regard, but that says it, in the context of her arguments.

In terms of the present political arena, everyone else is attempting to justify their position to some degree by arguments of ethics and values, or something that passes for that. Why not us? We had damned well better! Politics is the only forum for us now to defend our principles in full and before an electorate, to win them over. The best example I have seen of this recently was a question put by a "panelist" at the end of Buckley's "Firing Line" program, with the Galbraith clan on the hot seats just before the Demo convention. The man's name was Hillard, from Broward (?) U. His question, in paraphrase, was: "Isn't there a contradiction between the traditional rights to life, liberty, and property, on one hand, and these new "rights" to a living, job, home, etc. (the Roosevelt list) on the other, which must be provided by someone (gov't) at someone's expense (the taxpayers')? Can you (JK Galbraith) provide an ethical resolution of this contradiction?" Of course he couldn't! In fact, Galbraith and Buckley were reduced to a mumbling, bumbling, evasive agreement on this question, to the effect that those who produce ought to provide for those who don't, but it's a question of how much power government should exercise in doing it. The logic of the ethical argument was too much for either of them, and if Hillard had had the chance (it was the last minute of the show) and skill, he could have put the supreme lie to both of them right there. (I'm sure, from his terminology, that he was familiar with Objectivism.) The closest anyone came to an answer was Galbraith's assertion that there is no contradiction, really, it's just a matter of necessity (I think that was the implication that came through his twisted grammar). My little (16 yr. old) sister had asked a few weeks earlier for the definitive principles of conservatives and liberals, and who their chief spokesmen were; she got it right there, and understood very well. She knows next to nothing about politics yet...

I'll touch on this again in reference to the preamble. Back to brevity.

2. Issues. There is not one single issue before the public today that cannot be answered and resolved with concise and irrefutable logic (and an appeal to the values people are seeking—people are hungry for values in this country, as they say) by a skillful Libertarian speaker in the political forum. The Demos and Republicans have, at this point, themselves brought nearly every issue to a crisis in the public forum for us—how nice of them! And in doing so they have painted themselves into a political corner. In this sense may I quote a spokesman for the opposition: "Seize the time!" Now is the perfect time.

3. Organization. The current #1 political cliché is how superb organization brought McGovern from a virtual unknown to national prominence and control of the Demo party in six months. It wasn't just organization, of course—he read the pulse of the country very well, too, as per above—but that was the primary and indispensable aspect of his success so far.

For us, I am thinking of the success of the national convention, such as it was. In my mind, the major barrier to getting Libertarian ideas and motivation across to the general public has always been the problem of getting enough people together who have a sufficient grasp of principles—combined with the motivation and talent for sustained organizational work, and the capacity to come together on specific issues on the basis of consistent argument of principle in long and cool deliberation—to make a political party of this nature function, and to carry it into the national forum. The reason I was caught so by surprise by the advent of the party, was my belief, based on the intellectual conflicts I have seen among Libertarians, that the possibility of getting enough of those people together was at least five, perhaps ten years away; I was out of touch on that score. The national convention showed it can be done (in spite of the foreign policy problem, which should be easily solved by a position paper based on the development of principles which I attempted to introduce on the floor, and a few other such problems). In that sense, our hardest problem is already resolved, or will be when the NY Party puts together a consistent platform and finds a few major candidates who can put together the organizations to carry it to the public—i.e. effective speakers and managers. I assume from what you've said that we have some good candidates already.

Enough on that for now. A few remarks on the enclosure, and I'll quit.

When I had to defend my draft at the convention on such painfully short notice (I have very little experience as a speaker), and a draft which was itself written and submitted on short notice, I could only approach the problem in general terms of the function of the document—as the statement which must embody every principle necessary to justify and lead us to each plank of a platform; as the foundation from which every educational and campaign effort can be conducted in direct dialog with the electorate as well as by "pamphleteering"; as a statement which defines the essence of the party itself, as a movement and a political body, not only in terms of philosophical principle, but of purpose and intent in historical context; and with a form and style simple and direct, but forceful—in short, as a complete but concise declaration, a manifesto. But most important of all, as I particularly emphasized then, is that if the people who move the party ever lose sight of any of these basic principles which must be included in the document, or of their inseparability and logical consistency, then we are as bound to lose in the political arena and as an intellectual movement in the present historical context, as all those who have preceded us; we would then never separate ourselves as a party from the pragmatic politics of this age.

That neither Hospers' draft nor mine satisfied these basic requirements (though I believe mine did better) is apparent on closer examination (and comparison with my rewritten draft), and was well demonstrated by the foreign policy debacle at the convention. The primary cause of that was not the late hour nor lack of time; it was that the necessary principles were not consistently held before us, either in the preamble or in general.

These shortcomings must be resolved in the NY preamble to give us our best chance—indeed, any chance at all.

Once again, Rand makes the necessary arguments—implicitly or explicitly—in the book from which I quoted above. I went back and consulted the essays quoted, plus "Man's Rights" and "The Nature of Government", and reviewed the difficulties of the national convention, plus my "grass roots" intuition, and worked out the enclosed rewrite. I will write a word for word analysis and justification soon, if it seems needed in NY, but in any event for consideration

by the national party and other state parties before the next convention; but I include a few thoughts here for you (and anyone else you think it advisable to show this letter to).

The form is essential to a clear and convincing statement (again keeping in mind the function of the document as the standard of judgment): a logical progression from metaphysics (man's nature as a reasoning individual), to epistemology (reason and sovereign judgment), to ethics (rights). Having stated the necessary basis for politics, we arrive at government and economics. Only then does a statement of our purpose and intent as a political body, and of the nature of what or whom we oppose, carry full force and clear meaning.

Objections will no doubt arise, as at the national convention, to going into metaphysics; I refer you again to my previous arguments, with the addition of the example set by the Declaration of Independence. It was necessary there and worked beautifully; this document is of the same nature, and three lines devoted to it should not tax the concentration of anyone who would listen to us anyway. Without it, the issue of rights being absolute and inalienable, and of what rights are, becomes subject to arbitrary decision a la Buckley-Galbraith. On this point I absolutely oppose Hospers, who objected to the "by nature" argument and based his draft on the simple statement that the individual does have the right to dominion over his life, etc., which falls short even of the Declaration.

The elucidation of "right to life, liberty, and property" in the second paragraph ("to speak and act," etc.) is necessary to clear away the conceptual fog surrounding the precise meaning of these traditional, taken-for-granted words, and to put the necessary limits on the sophistry of people like Buckley. The reference to the sovereign judgment of the individual is again the keystone of this elucidation of rights: they have no meaning without that concept. The right of contract follows naturally enough.

The third paragraph is the critical point in the whole progression. The "initiation" clauses are the link, on one hand, between the metaphysical concept of the necessity for sovereignty of a reasoning individual, and the ethical concept of rights (sovereignty can only be, and always is, inhibited physically—therefore rights can only be violated, and always are, by the advent of force in human relations); and, on the other hand, between ethics (rights) and politics (government and economic systems). The right to defend can only be understood on the basis of the metaphysical argument, but then leads directly to the nature and limits of government.

The "inseparable" clause is again essential for reasons already given, as well as to tie up the argument on rights and to squelch the sophists.

(Having just taken a few minutes' break, during which I endured another quarter hour of Buckley vs. Galbraith at Miami, I am drawn to the conclusion that the sole essential difference between the two is that one is a fluent and sophisticated hypocrite, while the other is a simple bumbling one. Groan...)

The word "necessary" in the fifth paragraph derives from "the necessity for objective law...", which is the definitive quality of governments, as opposed to gangs which are directed by will (whim is Rand's word) instead of law. "Necessary" also implies that government must fulfill this function in every case, while "sole legitimate" implies it must not go beyond this function in any case; hence, "equal protection of rights under law". That this function can be carried out only "within defined territorial limits"—i.e. in territory where no other government instituted according to the aforementioned purpose and right of self-defense exercises its function—is the recognition of the right to institute government as stated, and that an institution is not a government if it is not sovereign in the exercise of its legitimate function within a territory; the extension of the function of one government beyond its defined limits, into the territory of another, would be a violation of the right to government of the citizens of the latter.

I know that these last points will stir great contention from the anarchist types, but that question must be laid to rest as soon as possible; otherwise, we will have no party. Either there is a necessity for objective law within a given territory, and therefore a right to institute government for that purpose within that territory, or not. If not, a given act in a given context may be an offense in one time and place, and not in another; there will be no law, logically defineable as such; and will then determines defensive use of force instead of law (government by men, not law, to reverse the phrase). In that case there is no basis for a political party that advocates particular laws, and candidates to codify and administer them.

I have touched on these points as being most in contention, or least thought about to date, but nonetheless essential to a consistent, functional document. I believe that every principle necessary to deal with any issue is now stated therein, in the simplest and most convincing form possible to such a document (length), and with logical development and consistent terms. That in itself, in my esthetic book, is most of the stylistic strength, but I expect to find some improvements there as I think about it further, and I'm sure others will also. This thing of "his or her", for instance...but it is necessary to make that explicit, somehow.

The last paragraph (summation of purpose and historical context) I leave to your own appraisal.

Thank you for bearing with me; I hope you will agree on the importance of the questions I have raised.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Paul Hodgson". The signature is fluid and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.