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Browne Campaign Furor!

Presidential Campaign Made Secret Payment; His '00 Manager Says It Gave Browne the '96 Nomination

A Secret Invoice

April, 2001. The Libertarian National Committee meets. Former LNC National Secretary John Famarularo passes around the room, distributing copies of a hitherto undisclosed document.

An invoice.

An invoice dated February 28, 1996, 12:11 PM, to Dean, Spear, & Associates, of Fullerton, California. An invoice from Perry Willis of Arlington, Virginia.

An invoice for \$2000, itemized as: December Letter, \$500; January Letter, \$500; February Letter, \$500; First Prospecting Letter \$500.

At the time the Invoice was prepared and the work was done, Willis was the Libertarian Party's National Director, a salaried post subject to the Party's employment policies.

Dean, Spear, was a political consulting group shown by FEC reports for 1995-1996 to be receiving \$1000 a month from the Browne campaign for consulting and reimbursement for printing and travel.

Willis Confesses

In a 20-page memorandum dated May 11, 2001 (available on the web at www.harrybrowne.org/policy as a .PDF file) 1996 National Director (and Browne 2000 campaign manager) Perry Willis admitted that the invoice was genuine: he took the money.

"...I had to disobey an LNC Policy," he writes. In extended remarks, Willis makes clear that he wrote the itemized fundraising letters for Browne, and that he accepted payment for doing so.

Willis admits that he knew that he was violating

(Willis Confesses! Continued on page 2)

Underwood Prepares to Campaign

PVLA member Robert Underwood is preparing to launch his campaign for Mayor of Springfield. Massachusetts election law makes this a major struggle, what with a legal requirement to open a special bank account that most banks will not offer, financial disclosure filings, and signature collections. Underwood estimates that he will need 500 signatures to get on the ballot. Despite the roadblocks of Massachusetts' transparently corrupt incumbent protection acts, Underwood is persevering in his efforts to file for office.

News from Georgia

LFR Special Correspondent Don Gorman writes: Saturday, April 28, was a busy day, with a New Bedford, MA campaign seminar and flight to Atlanta to the Georgia LP Convention. At the Convention, I gave 60 people a two-hour preview of my Campaign School for Winners, to be held in Atlanta on June 9-10.

It was fun meeting many new, energetic people from Georgia, and catching up on the latest news from Art Olivier, who spoke at the Convention. Dave Nolan and David Bergland were both in attendance as guest speakers. Unfortunately, arriving so late on Saturday night, I missed their speeches. Instead, I happened to walk in just as Michael Cloud was in the middle of his "Carla for Governor" fund-raiser. Cloud assured the crowd that this was for the Carla Howell for Governor race, not the Carla Howell for President race, but that the audience would hear more on that later.

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LNC rules: "As of late

1995,...Bill (Winter) and I were employed by the LNC and a new policy prohibited us from assisting nomination campaigns."

Willis goes on at great length to explain why he did what he did. In essence, Willis supported Harry Browne's Presidential campaign. Under LNC rules, he could not work for Browne. Willis claims that he recognized three choices: (1) Resign as National Director and help Browne. (2) Persuade the LNC to change its rules. (3) Stay on as National Director and disobey the National Committee's rules for its employees. He does not list a (4) Stay on as National Director and obey Party rules.

Willis also admits that he hid the payments from the Party, and prevaricated about having taken them. He writes:

"Some people have hurt feelings because I concealed my actions from them or I lied to them. I understand. I sympathize. I feel badly about that. But this only goes so far.

"If I had informed people of what I was doing, they would have had to stop me and thereby stop the benefits to the party. Or they would have had to hide what they knew..."

Illicit Payment Procured '96 Nomination for Browne

Perry Willis and the Browne campaign engaged in a secret exchange. Willis wrote letters for the Browne campaign. The Browne campaign paid Willis, laundering its funds through a third party. Did the exchange matter? Did the letters do Browne any good? Or did Browne waste two grand?

On this matter, Willis is totally clear. Quoting again from his May 11 memo: "As of late 1995,...The Browne campaign was running deep into debt and was in danger of having to curtail its outreach activities. This would have had negative consequences for future fundraising that could have led the campaign to suspend operations entirely." and "Even with my help the Browne campaign struggled to make it to election day. Without my help I don't think they would have made it through the winter of 1995-96."

Readers in New England will recall Browne did extensive fundraising for a serious effort to contest the New Hampshire primary. As 1996 approached, Browne cancelled, welshing on his commitments to his donors and reducing his later fundraising here.

Is Willis's claim true? Did he save Browne's campaign? On one hand, he should know. He managed Browne's 2000 campaign, so his judgement is

based on experience. On the other hand, it was in Willis's self-interest to claim he saved Browne in 1996. He could have said "My acts were forbidden, but didn't matter. Browne would have been nominated anyhow." Willis instead said his acts saved Browne, allowing his critics to say the payment was important, not de minimis(trivial).

Browne Knew and Approved

Michael Gilson deLemos, LNC Regional Representative from Florida, posted to his Regional Email list the *draft* minutes of the last LNC Executive Committee Meeting. Attached to those minutes was a purported eMail exchange between Harry Browne and long-time LP activist Mary Gingell. We quote from the Regional email list:

From: "Mary Gingell" To: "Harry Browne"
Saturday, May 12, 2001 1:25 AM

Hi, Harry.

It occurs to me that now that Perry's memo is being broadcast around the country, the following question is sure to come up - is the fact that this memo can be found on the harrybrowne.org website an indication that you concur with Perry's opinion that violating the LPC conflict of interest rules in 1996 in order to help the Browne for President campaign is justifiable? And even if you don't believe that allowing him to post this memo on your website is an implicit endorsement of it, what, in fact, is your position on the issue?

So I guess I am asking it . . . as someone who defended him, and Winter, and Sharon, and you during that time and assured people that they were not, in fact, in violation of the policy. I would appreciate knowing how you felt about it then, and how you feel about it now.

From: "Harry Browne" To: "Mary Gingell"

Date: Tue, 15 May 2001 00:29:47 -0500

Dear Mary:

Sorry for the delay in getting back to you.

I'll be issuing a statement in the next couple of days. I imagine it will find it's way to you.

In the meantime, you should know that I was aware of Perry's actions and agreed to them.

Harry

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Carol McMahan (Treasurer, PVLA)

221 Bumstead Road

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Checks Payable "Carol McMahan", please.

We Have A Winner!

from a letter by Worcester LP activist Rich Fields...

I just wanted to say that I will be unable to attend the Worcester City meeting due to a Presidential Inauguration of me. We recently had an election here at Clark and I am now the Clark University Student President. So, there will be a Libertarian President in our time :)

- Rich Fields rfields@clarku.edu

Supper Clubs—Advice

The Pioneer Valley Libertarian Association was started as a supper club. John Brickner and friends got together at The Wild Boar, had dinner, and discussed politics. Not 'Isn't the Duopoly Awful' but 'What We Should Be Doing'. It took a while for things to get off the ground. But we started running people for office. And getting people appointed to office. First one. Then two. Then many. Oh, and we had occasional dinner speakers. Interesting speakers. Frightening speakers. But we always remembered we were here to have dinner, build comradeship, and get to know each other, so that when we ran for office, we would have political friends we could ask for help.

And now, from across the United States, I present ideas on 'Supper Clubs' and what they—that's us, folks!—should do:

Steve Trinward trinward@bellsouth.net:

Back when I was in the Massachusetts LP during its early years, we tried a combination of several things to bring out the warm bodies and sift them for activists: state conventions always included a banquet, as well as a couple of keynote marquee speakers; supper club meetings drew more actual people than activist ones; etc.

During the mid and late 80s (post NYC '83, when I had run screaming to the hinterlands, along with many others), almost the only real activism in MA was centered around the monthly game nights (which still provide a contact point today, for newbies as well as veterans and burnouts). They also provided a rallying point for the campaigns and petition drives that did represent actual politicking.

Then I came to Tennessee, where in the last two years we have held 3 conventions (two strictly business; one last August, with the only public appearance Harry Browne made in the state all campaign). There were **no** banquets, almost **no** marquee speakers (this year's keynote was Jim Lark, on campus and local organizing issues...) ... and usually not even a formal luncheon (local restaurants like The Cooker got the business, usually *all* of it!).

We've also had a Middle Let Freedom Ring! TN convocation in the last three months, and plan to do them quarterly if the interest is there.

Moreover, the "convention site" has lately become the conference area of a local realtor's office (father-and-son owners just happen to both be good Libertarians and LPTN members -- along with their entire families ...). Coffee and soft drinks provided. Business sticking to the agenda. Done in a single day ... We also hold monthly meetings for the local (Davidson) county party there.

No frills, no bells and whistles ... Sixty out of the 99 counties now have somewhat organized parties across the state; probably a dozen and a half of these are fairly active, and the number is increasing. (Compare that with mid-1999, when the number was in single digits at best ...)

It *can* be done. It *does* draw a smaller number of warm bodies, but the percentage of activists is very high. And it doesn't take high-dollar speakers and dog-and-pony shows ...

"Mark F. Murphy" markm@tyrell.com:

Some sort of "event" is good for once a month...

But it is a lot of work.

Myself and some other activists way back when I was Chair of LPOC did a monthly speaking event.

It had a couple goals:

- o Always have a current event sort of topic
- o Always invite speakers from different groups who are aligned with you on a topic (i.e. guns, soc sec)
- o Offer to mail to the speaker's group
- o Have more of an influx from the other group than our own

The purpose?

To expose the **other** people to **us** Libs.

Show we are **real** and not looney.

Build a relationship.

Offer exposure.

Supper clubs (as we mostly understand them) are mostly marketed to our own internal folks.

As most of us have discussed here... we are trying to figure out how to get involved **outside** our circle.

Supper clubs tend **not** to do that... though properly done there's no reason why they couldn't.... but I don't think many of us would recognize it as a supper club.

The bottom line. Differentiate outward reaching events from inward reaching events

And an Email discussion between Mike Hihn liberty@MikeHihn.com and Bill Woolsey Bill.Woolsey@Citadel.edu

Mike Hihn wrote of Washington: New leadership came in, changed the focus to creating local supper clubs as a higher priority than local parties—which was a major disaster—and also cost us the cities we had already organized, plus the ones who were just watching so far.

Bill Woolsey asked for a clarification: Local supper clubs vs. local parties? What does that mean?

Mike Hihn answered: Social-centered instead of activism-centered -- on the premise that "fun" events and speakers will attract more people to a meeting. But that's neither true nor relevant.

Is it a matter of name? Or is it about eating? Or is it about the formality of the organization? Is it about having speakers? Or is it something about mission.

All of the above. <g>

No way will I speculate on motivation, but it was felt that "fun" and "social" activities would attract more people than "business meetings" or direct activism (as if that meant anything at all). Well, it was a colossal failure, as I indicated in my full message. We lost us our city-based parties (which had proven their value), and drove most of our larger regions into a coma. Imagine a regional party (half our largest county), with approximately 250 members, but not even an elected chair -- the same region, btw, which had fielded all those candidates just two years earlier.

In the other half of that same county, one elected chair got large attendance with three "famous" speakers, ran out of big names so attendance plummeted, saw zero residual effect from the high early attendance, and promptly quit. For anyone who misses the point: you can attract even more people to a movie theater, for a top movie, but nobody sane would claim those people will then become political activists.

In another region, the state party interfered with an already-announced county organizing meeting, by scheduling a competing meeting on the same evening (for mostly a supper club)! Well, nobody went to the state-sponsored meeting, a major clue that is still being ignored.

Virtually all our best activists and candidates from two years ago are now inactive or have quit. I'm not sure how many state parties have had the opportunity to so directly compare the local activism model with the centralized command and control model.

Okay, I will speculate a bit on motivation. I see

the same thing in the national party with different details. I saw it for decades as a small-business consultant. If you set the wrong goals, organizations can literally destroy themselves—while also bragging (honestly) about achieving their goals.

Leaderships—especially elected leaderships—tend to do what they know how to do, so they can say they did what they promised. The problem here is—we (institutionally) know almost nothing about electing Libertarians and/or governing—so we keep electing officers (state and local) who do what they can do—which is largely useless. That's why we get Archimedes, with associated coverups, membership club mentality, and all sorts of other goals (like high-visibility paper campaigns) that lead ... nowhere. Or—equally useless—bragging about how many people attend a supper club, instead of how many people you **elect**.

Then—when local candidates do surface on their own, in the examples I gave, state officers cannot claim credit for that, so those candidates get ignored.

Meanwhile, Greens tend to ignore everything above the town-level, have no social functions at all, and they are now cleaning our clocks. Duh.

A lack of focus on winning elections—which requires both activism **and** a local focus—will tend to create similar results. To some extent, we're just like a business—ignore the bottom line and you lose. As a political party, we simply have a different bottom line.

One bottom line for this thread: even a local affiliate has no value to us—if it doesn't do politics.

And we must also insulate our local affiliates from the state and national bureaucracies.

Tim Crowley: The LP has no shortage of brains and principle. It does have a shortage of people who are willing to 'network'. I've been at Libertarian local events where a new person comes in, sits down, watches the meeting, and leaves without anyone there saying 'hello', making a little small talk, getting their address, and maybe even giving them a brochure about the group.

One solution is to have **every** group appoint someone to be **Outreach Chair**. This person goes to meetings, looks for new faces, and introduces him/herself as the outreach chair. Ask people what **their** key issues are. Ask them what **their** expect from the LP. Steer them away from boring people who scare newcomers off.