
Libertarian Strategy Gazette

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It's a Rough World

Some of you may have noticed that I have been less frequent of late in writing essays for this column. There is a reason for this: a couple of months ago I had the good fortune to get married. As such, I have been spending less time writing these columns and more time on other things...such as woodworking.

Like many a typical libertarian, I had piles of books, magazines and papers scattered about the house, organized Zen-like in apparent chaos, yet actually utilizing my spatial memory to keep track of multiple projects. Such is not acceptable after marriage. So I have been at the task of making shelves - not just any shelves, but shelves that actually look nice; bachelor quality will no longer suffice. This requires hours of work with sandpaper and steel wool.

There is an intersection between woodworking and writing, however. Repetitive work such as sanding causes the mind to wander, and wander in the fashion of the poets and sages of yore. That is, the mind takes lessons from unconnected phenomena and builds metaphors to express those lessons. Such work teaches a harsh lesson: start with too fine a grade of sandpaper and you will fail to take out the roughest parts of the wood. Instead, you will smooth the tops of the ridges while leaving rough valleys underneath. But if you do start with coarse sandpaper, you will make the areas that are already smooth rougher. But it is best to use the coarse paper anyway, for you can take out that roughness with the finer papers, and the overall results will be far better - and quicker. Delayed gratification means bigger gratification sooner.

There is a lesson here for Libertarians. The path to liberty does mean advocating the use of The State in the intermediate term. To fail to do so is to fail to win office and effect any changes. The transitional measures are important.

For example, talk of federal tax cuts is premature. The government has \$7 trillion in debt to pay off. This money has already been spent or committed. Even with some massive cuts in discretionary spending, we still need to keep taxes high in order to begin to pay down the interest-bearing debt and to prepare for the retirement of the Baby-Boomers. This is not pleasant, but if it is not done, futures taxes will be higher. We can productively talk about simpler taxes - including taxes that we find unacceptable in the long run - but lower federal taxes are a dream for the future.

Or consider recreational drugs. One of the better arguments for legalizing them is that the government can make a bunch of money taxing them. It is good to make this argument even though it does involve advocating a tax. Yes we are making scratches, applying our metaphor, but we are getting rid of a

[It's a Rough World] (Continued on page 2)

Stand Up for Liberty!

The Local Organization Strategy
for the Libertarian Party

In 1999, I wrote a book on Libertarian Party Strategy, the strategy that a successful political party should follow. Since then, we have had a National Committee that has gone off in its own direction, a direction in which it manages the business affairs of the Party, but does not focus on doing politics itself. It seems to be an appropriate time to recall that alternative political strategies are available.

Introduction

Stand Up for Liberty! discusses political strategy. Political strategy is a tool. Political Strategy lets us create circumstances under which we win elections. We already win isolated elections here and there. It is through sound political strategy that we will win lots of elections from Maine to Florida to Hawaii to Alaska.

To my knowledge, you are holding the only recent book focused entirely on Libertarian political strategy. There are several fine references on political tactics -- what to do during a single election campaign. There are plenty of books on Libertarian theory -- what Libertarians would do if they took political power. This book focuses on turning "if" into a future in which "Libertarians won lots of elections and brought the Libertarian future to America."

Stand Up for Liberty! advocates a particular political strategy for the Libertarian Party. The strategy's name has been spoken for years. The name is the strategic concept. *Stand Up for Liberty!* is an implementation proposal. *Stand Up for Liberty!* discusses turning the strategic concept into concrete actions.

I'm not the Libertarian Party's only strategist. Other strategists give convention speeches, publish newsletters and internet pages, mail fundraising letters, and seek Party office for themselves and their champions. Some of us actually try to put our ideas into effect. If you listen to what we say and watch what we do, you'll see that there are at least three major proposed strategies for the Libertarian movement. We'll come back to these strategies later.

Stand Up for Liberty! is not about campaign tactics. If you are running for office right now, this book won't tell you how to win. When you are down in the trenches, it's time for tactics. It's time to press the flesh and get out your vote. It's too late for strategy.

Strategy prepares the foundation for electoral victory, so when you and your fellow Libertarians all run for office, you win lots of elections. Strategy is about creating an environment in which Libertarians are routinely elected to office.

[Stand Up for Liberty] (Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1) [It's a Rough World]

really bad jagged area. We are replacing needless incarceration, clogged courts, the destruction of the Bill of Rights, and funding of terrorism by advocating a new tax. I even go as far as to suggest that marijuana should be sold in state-owned liquor stores. I am against privatizing state-owned liquor stores for states that have them for two reasons: (1) many people are more likely to trust them than privately owned stores for selling marijuana to adults only, and (2) it might be easier to deal with the federal government, since the feds must actually arrest a state government.

Or consider education. Vouchers do mean government spending and even government manipulation of private schools. Even so, they are a huge step toward liberty, and should be advocated. Later, we can argue for privatization of even the vouchers. Today, the idea of educating the poor with charity is unthinkable to most.

Or consider Iraq. It is all well and good to say we should never have gone there, but we are there now. It is time for constructive suggestions, not history lessons. What do we have in our corpus of ideas that might apply in Iraq? How about our recognition that democracy is not a panacea? Perhaps Iraq should be split into multiple countries. This may make the U.N. unhappy, but when did Libertarians care what the U.N. thinks?

It is time to set priorities. Which laws are the worst? What can we do to fix them the most quickly, taking into account political reality? Once we have done this, we can move on to the next level of refinement.

...Carl Milsted

(Continued from page 1) [Stand Up for Liberty!]

Strategy is about creating an environment in which Libertarian policies routinely go into effect.

When you play chess, every good move has at least two purposes. When you run for office, your campaign should also have two purposes. It has a tactical purpose: Get you elected!. It has a strategic purpose: Build an environment in which Libertarians win! The tactical and strategic purposes of a well-done campaign never conflict.

I'm not saying: don't run for office. Running for office is a very important part of the strategy I advocate here. I am saying: there's more to winning the Libertarian future than fielding candidates.

Stand Up for Liberty! outlines how Libertarians can most effectively apply their resources to promote their political philosophy. How should you best invest your time, money, and votes? Like many Libertarians, I want to see a future in which the Libertarian Party and libertarian political philosophy bring the United States to the Libertarian Future of peace, freedom, and prosperity. In *Stand Up for Liberty* I describe the path for reaching that future.

What are you not reading?

As I type, it's 1999. Go to your book store. In 1999, you can

find stacks of books about Libertarian ideas. There are books discussing which ideas a Libertarian must support. There are books explaining how tell if a new idea is really Libertarian at its core. There are even books explaining which ideas a Libertarian cannot possibly support.

Stand Up for Liberty! is not one of those books.

I didn't write this book to tell you what Libertarianism is. If you want to find out what different Libertarians think Libertarianism is, read the Libertarian Party Platform, not to mention books by Boaz, Hayek, Ruwart, and Lott.

I didn't write this book to convert our country's liberals, populists, and conservatives to libertarianism. I want them to convert, preferably before I run for office again, but that's not why I wrote this book.

Nor did I write this book so I could sing hymns at the choir. All too many Libertarians are all too expert at preaching at the faithful.

If you are one of our country's Democrats or Reformers or Republicans, after reading this book you will still be a Democrat or Reformer or Republican. This book wasn't written to persuade you to change parties. It was written to create political circumstances in which you and your children discover for yourselves, in your own ways, that the Libertarian Party is the Party of the American Dream. It was written to create the political circumstances in which you too will voluntarily choose to *Stand Up for Liberty!* and Vote Libertarian!

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Libertarians.

[However, suppose you are a Democrat or Reformer or Republican. Ask yourself: Where are my party's strategy books? Where does my party debate the path to Democratic/Reform/Republican victory? What is our plan -- as opposed to this year's fundraising gimmick -- for winning elections? If the Libertarians masses debate strategy, and individual members of my party do not, what does that say about my party's openness? Is my party run by its owners, or by a small elite? If Libertarians do more thinking about strategy than my party does, do they think more carefully about their political ideas, too?] That question is for another book.

How did I get here?

In 1996, I accepted the nomination of the Libertarian Association of Massachusetts. I agreed to be their candidate for the United States Senate, running against Republican Bill Weld and Democrat John Kerry. In the end, the Massachusetts Libertarian Party failed to get me on the ballot.

I learned from experience. Success demands understanding, targeting, planning, and initiative. If you don't understand where you are, it's hard to know where to go. If you don't target where you want to go, you'll never know that you've arrived. If you set off with no plan, you're unlikely to end up where you want. If you never take the initiative to start, you'll probably never get anywhere.

Of course, sitting and waiting, eyes and ears closed with no planning, is a strategy. It's even a good strategy if you're a rock and your objective is to help the moss grow. It's not a good strategy if you're a Libertarian and want to reach the Libertarian future during your lifetime.

Real success demands understanding of the objective circumstances of your situation. Before you decide what your situation allows you to do, you need to learn what your situation is. You can't play the game until you learn enough rules. Real success demands targeting, because no situation compels action. If you jump from an airplane, what you do with your parachute is determined by your choice of medical condition after landing. Real success demands sound planning based on your goals and your objective circumstances. The ship Liberty steers better after a course has been selected for her. Finally, success demands initiative. In order to win, you -- yes, you the reader -- need to *Stand Up for Liberty!* and Make Liberty Happen!

In 1998, I again accepted the nomination of the Libertarian Association of Massachusetts. I agreed to *Stand Up for Liberty!* and run for the United States Congress in the Massachusetts Third District. This time, I'd studied the situation carefully. I made a sound plan with good safety margins. I took the initiative, rather than waiting for someone else to run me for office.

In the end, I got on the ballot without a glitch. I did the things a serious candidate does: Advertise. Meet voters. Send out press releases. Distribute bumper stickers. I was in a dozen debates against my two opponents. Four days before the election, 7PM Eastern Standard Time, our three-way de-

bate from Channel 3 Worcester went out on C-SPAN2. For a full hour, viewers from coast to coast got to compare my Libertarian principles with the stale policies of the Democratic-Republican duopoly.

I knew that winning the race would be extremely challenging. However, in 1998, I had studied the objective situation. I learned enough of the rules of game. I identified my target. *I Stood Up for Liberty!* and ran for office. My plans executed as expected within the limits of my resources. My vote total doubled the vote percentage achieved in 1996 by the Libertarian Presidential team of Harry Browne and Jo Jorgenson.

As it happened, I did not win. For us to win consistently requires a new environment, not just a new candidate. As a candidate, I did my bit to move America toward that environment, an environment which supports the Libertarian ideals of freedom, prosperity, and peace. To reach that environment in our lifetimes, we must apply our resources effectively. *Stand Up for Liberty!* sets out a path for investing our resources and attaining our goals.

Am I a Libertarian?

While some people will take good ideas wherever they find them, others worry about their provenance. To some readers, an idea can be no better than its author. What, then, are my Libertarian credentials?

I'm a Libertarian. I want to move America in the direction of far smaller government, far lower taxes, and far higher respect for the personal liberty of every single American. *I'm not an anarchist.* I have no interest in abolishing government, though I will not complain if someone shows me something that's better in principle and in practice. Nor do I expect that a Libertarian future will be utopia. Our real world is limited by material constraints and human failings. Utopia is only limited by the outer envelope of human imagination.

I expect that a Libertarian future will have difficulties and challenges, many of which we will fail to anticipate before they happen. I also expect that a Libertarian future will have fewer difficulties than any alternative. I am firmly convinced that "better than the alternatives" is all that really matters. We may not end disease, but a Libertarian future will have fewer obstacles between the sick and new cures. We may not cure poverty, but a poor man in a Libertarian future will enjoy comforts beyond the imagination of our forefathers. We may not end assaults on freedom, but in a Libertarian future government will protect the person, property, and freedom of every person, not enslave that person, destroy her property, and end her liberties.

So where are we? How do we reach the Libertarian future?

Stand Up for Liberty! presents my strategy, the True Path to Libertarian Victory. The core ideas reduce to pat phrases. Implementing the core ideas is a bit more challenging.

Could I have written *Stand Up for Liberty!* at less length? Probably. I'm a college professor. I'm long winded. My private employer pays me to be long winded. It's implicit in my job description. If you want to read a condensed version of this book, just be patient. If the demand is sufficient, the market will provide.

I note with thanks:

The Libertarian Party has at its disposal a host of armchair strategists and practical campaigners. Many of these people have set out their own ideas on what we should do. I've been heavily influenced by these people in my reading, my conversations, and my EMail exchanges. I claim no monopoly or originality for any idea here. Up to the limits of a faulty memory, the words are mine.

If I appear to see farther than some other Libertarians, it's because like a certain fellow physicist I stand on the shoulders of giants. I acknowledge being influenced by the words and ideas of many fellow Libertarians, not all of whom agree with me, including in alphabetical order Jorge Amador, John Brickner, Gene Cisewski, John Famularo, Mike Hihn, Gail Lightfoot, Jesse Markowitz, Ken Peterson, Janice Presser, Michael Sensor.

Chapter One
The Ultimate Objective: Grand Strategy

Where are we trying to go?

Our objective is the Libertarian Society, a nation with small government, low taxes, and obedience to the whole Bill of Rights without any compromises.

How are we going to get there?

Our path is electoral action: electing office holders who will move America in the Libertarian direction.

As tactical maneuvers, we could also engage in non-electoral actions:

- litigation,
- community organization,
- unwelcome publicity,
- peaceable assembly and petition for redress of grievances,
- initiatives and referendums, or even
- peaceful civil disobedience.

Non-electoral actions are valuable tools. Non-electoral tactical maneuvers do not replace contesting elections and putting libertarians in office.

How do we put libertarians into office? How do we gain a position from which we can put Libertarian policies into effect? Three options for victory are:

Conversion: Get other parties to steal our ideas and put them into effect. Their people become libertarian in deed if not name.

Capture: Take over another major party, the Democratic or the Republican. Their voters then follow our leaders.

Self-reliance: Build up our party, the Libertarian Party, until it has electoral dominance. We the Libertarian Party then put Libertarians in office.

Each Victory Option may win for us. See below for more:

Needs: No matter which approach we choose, we have the same needs: The **Alphabet**, the **Numbers**, the **V's** of Victory.

The **Alphabet** A-B-C-D-E gives us

- Activists
- Ballot Status
- Candidates
- Dollars
- Enrolled Libertarians.

A-B-C-D-E: Activists and Specialists do the party's heavy lifting. Ballot Status, different in each state, lets us run people for office. Running people for office requires Candidates (people who win elections) and Dollars (the foundation for electoral success.) Enrolled Libertarians are our supporters, people who register Libertarian or join local, state, or national Libertarian Party organizations.

Through the Alphabet, we'll get the **Numbers**. The Numbers are the bricks and mortar from which victory is built.

Before we win, before we put libertarian policies into effect, we need the Numbers:

- Hundreds of Libertarian campaign consultants.
- Thousands of libertarian PACs and libertarian-principled special interest groups.
- Tens of thousands of Libertarians in elective office.
- Hundreds of thousands of candidates.
- Millions of hours of donated volunteer time.
- Hundreds of millions of dollars of campaign donations.

All to capture the

- billions of votes that Americans cast each election cycle.

The **Numbers:** Numbers are the foundation of a modern party. There are half a million elective and appointive political positions in the United States. Before we can capture them, we need the numbers.

Numbers get us the **V's** of Victory. The V's of victory are

- Volunteers
- Voters
- Victories

The V's: Volunteers do the vital work of the party: getting out the vote, stuffing envelopes, collecting petition signatures, distributing signs,... Voters are the people who actually decide if we win. Victories are the token of success, something we need to accumulate as we go along, if only to prove that we can win.

Discussion: What the Victory Options need.

Each victory option needs the same ingredients for success: the Alphabet, the Numbers, and the V's of victory.

In the Conversion Option, other parties find it worthwhile to copy our ideas. They find it worthwhile because we are threatening their incumbency. To threaten their incumbency, we need to be seen as an electoral threat: a party that is winning elections. To win elections, we need the Alphabet, the Numbers, and the V's.

In the Capture Option, our activists join one of the two major parties. They make that party ours. Capture needs a massive effort to get activists to attend caucuses, win primaries, and convince voters that a libertarian Republican or a libertarian Democratic Party is as supportable as a conservative Republican or liberal Democratic Party was. Because real American political parties are democratically run, Capture requires convincing their tens of millions of supporters to become libertarian. To capture a major party, we need the Alphabet, the Numbers, and the V's.

In the Self-Reliance Option, we run candidates, convert voters and elect a Libertarian Party majority from sea to shining sea in every level of government. Self-Reliance demands that we create a political organization as strong as the Democratic and Republican organizations. To win through Self-Reliance, we need the Alphabet, the Numbers, and the V's.

Note the similarity. *No matter which option we follow, we need the Alphabet, the Numbers, and the V's.*

Conversion needs fewer political resources than Capture. Capture, in turn, needs fewer political resources than Self-Reliance. The actual numbers I gave above match Libertarian Victory through Self-Reliance. If we could win through Conversion or Capture, we will need fewer resources.

In 1999, we don't have enough consultants, PACs, interest groups, office-holders, candidates, volunteers, or money to generate the votes we need for victory. No matter which option you support -- no matter which option works in the end -- we need far more of the numbers before we elect a Libertarian majority in America.

I gave the numbers for the difficult path - the Self-Reliant Path to Libertarian Victory. That's the path I expect we need. If we're lucky, an easier path will be good enough, and we win sooner. That's great if it happens. Stand Up for Liberty! gives plans for winning by the difficult path. Easy victory is an unexpected bonus.

The rest of this chapter discusses the Victory Options. I close with a short history of third party movements. Chapter Two presents paths to victory: how the Libertarian Party can achieve the Alphabet and the Numbers needed for the V's.

Discussion: Victory Options.

Let's consider Conversion, Capture, and Self-Reliance more

carefully.

Conversion: There are historical precedents for victory by conversion. In the 1910's and 1920's, the Socialist Party started electing mayors, state legislators, and Congressmen. After a while, many socialist ideas were put into effect by the Democrats and Republicans. The Libertarian Party could try to do the same. We could try to drive the other major parties in the Libertarian direction.

Methods for conversion are straightforward. Many Democrats are already libertarian on many social freedom issues. Liberals are often open to utilitarian ("look! it works!") arguments. They are wide open to conversion because libertarian ideas work in the real world. Many Republicans support small government, low taxes, and patriotic restoration of the Constitution. They are wide open to being converted from the party that makes promises about their causes to the party that enacts their causes.

However, Socialist ideas became compelling because Socialists won elections. The Socialist Party threatened the incumbency of elected public officials. Borrowing parts of the Socialist platform was a survival tactic; it separated the Socialists from their winning advantage. The tactic worked! Few Socialist Party members hold office any more.

A slight variation on this theme works in New York politics. In New York, fusion is easy. Ballots have a line for each major party. A candidate appears on the ballot line of every party that nominates him. Many people who would not vote for a Democrat or a Republican will vote for the same person when he appears on the Liberal line. The New York Liberal Party dragged New York politics leftward, but not by electing its own people. The Liberals succeeded by endorsing Democrats and Republicans. It succeeded by running Liberal spoiler candidates to split the left vote and defeat people they disliked. More recent New York third parties (Conservative, Right to Life) mostly emulate Liberal Party tactics.

What lessons do Socialist and Liberal Party successes have for us? Socialist ideas were copied because socialists were winning elections. Liberal platform stands were adopted because Liberal candidates were deciding elections. To repeat the Socialist success, we need a party machine that elects many mayors and aldermen, significant numbers of state legislators, and at least some Congressmen. To repeat the Liberal success, we need a party machine that can effectively endorse Democrats or Republicans. In 1999, we don't have a party machine like that.

It's fair to ask: will the Democrats and Republicans copy our ideas? We don't promise bigger bureaucracies, more spending and patronage, or new laws to benefit campaign donors. We promise the end of these traditions. It sounds challenging to persuade Democratic and Republican incumbents to change their coats. How can two the parties of high taxes, huge government, and contempt for the Bill of Rights possibly copy us? Nonetheless...

Conversion is viable because America has a secret political party, the party to which almost every elected official belongs. In 1998, that party surfaced in Washington State. The Democratic and Republican U. S. Senators began making joint appearances. They said they were showing that Democrats and Republicans can work together for our Republic's good. They were actually campaigning for the secret political party, the Incumbency Party, the party whose sole platform plank is ``Re-Elect Me!'. When re-election requires copying our ideas, our ideas will be copied.

Capture: There are historical and modern precedents for political victory by capturing a major party that already exists. The Republican Party was founded as the anti-slavery party. It won in 1860, but not by converting individual voters into Republicans. The strategy had already failed in 1856. The Republicans elected Lincoln because they captured the Whig Party.

A modern example of capture is seen inside the Republican Party. In several states, local and state Republican organizations have been captured by Christian Coalition and other patriotic traditionalists. The capture was done above the board by old fashioned politics. Supporters of right-wing moralizing studied election laws, appeared at caucuses and polling places, and elected their people to party office. In many cases, they did this without telling their opponents in advance. Sometimes they found attractive candidates who supported their positions, and ran those candidates on innocuous platforms. To the broader public, these people were attractive non-ideological aspirants for office. Behind the scenes, the traditionalists knew who their friends were, and quietly supported them.

This strategy was used in the 1960s by conservative Republicans. Until the 1960's, the Republican Party had had a strong liberal wing, with prominent Republican Governors, Senators, and other political leaders supporting liberalism. The conservative wing of the party concluded that conservatives were the majority at the grassroots. They concluded that in order to win, they needed to topple their party's deadwood so they could grow in the electoral sunlight. They launched primary campaigns, targeting liberal Republicans for defeat. The possibility that a Democratic candidate could beat a split Republican Party was viewed as an acceptable short-term loss. They succeeded. In 1960, a liberal Republican Governor of New York could summon the Republican Presidential candidate and dictate terms for support. By 1996, there were no prominent liberal Republicans. Conservative Southern Republican Governors picked Bob Dole for President.

Can we capture fractions of the other parties? There are already lots of groups trying to capture our opponents. The Republicans are pursued by Christian traditionalists and Main Street business interests. The Democrats are pursued by government employee unions. Both parties are pursued by everyone who feeds at the Federal and State troughs. That's a lot of competition, all needing to be beaten before we can even put our candidates in front of the voters.

To Be Continued

