

Libertarian Strategy

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In six years the Libertarian Movement has learned a lot of lessons. While libertarian theory continues to evolve and grow, the basic ideology of 1969 remains valid. In fact, libertarian theory has reacted to the stimulation of the swings and jolts from conflicting strategies.

So that we are not condemned to relive it, let's review our history. As of December, 1968, libertarian strategy was directed either toward influence of the conservatives or conversion of the independents. It was wholly educational or retreatist. Robert LeFevre's Rampart College, Leonard Read's FEE, Joe Galambos' FEI, Nathaniel Branden's NBI, F. A. Harper's IHS, and Frank Chodorov's ISI were all educational institutes. The VonuLifers, Atlantis group, and Oliverites were seeking escape. Except for the LIBERAL INNOVATOR's leafletting of the Cow Palace in 1964, no libertarians were involved in a political campaign except as deviationist individuals. Many supported Nixon in 1968, but they were clearly of conservative leanings.

The very victory of Nixon and sell-out of libertarian-conservative modest goals soured these "campaigning individualists." The rise of activist organizing as an alternative to political campaigning and the seeming possibility of New Left revolution attracted the campaigners to a plausible alternative. Libertarians organized a caucus within YAF with results we all know. In December 1968, Rothbard and his small group of radical libertarians—Block, Tuccille, Childs. et al.—moved to bring libertarianism into SDS and the New Left. The Radical Libertarian Alliance was formed.

In 1969 the right-coalition tactic exploded in St. Louis. But within a month the New Left-alliance tactic also shattered in New York. To both the Libertarian Caucus and RLA leaders' surprise, the result was the formation Of independent Libertarian Alliances across the country, with the RLA and SIL central organizations becoming just "tendencies." SIL adapted, becoming a clearing house to the more scattered locals. RLA turned briefly from a revolutionary group to a political campaign group in late 1971, and the Citizens for a Restructured Republic promptly died on the campaign trail of 1972.

Graduation from universities began to decay the campus-based libertarian alliances from 1970-72, and the LA's began to replant themselves in the straight communities. Eventually they would exhibit themselves as Supper Clubs, Libertarian Churches, or just meetings (e.g.: Gary Greenberg's NYLA). These were sound roots being set, but hardly the spectacular, "shake-the-world" activities of the 1969-71 period.

More escapism offered itself (Minerva, Abaco) and the educators kept educating. Many libertarians pursued more valuable long-range activities, combining their business or professional careers with libertarian advocacy: running businesses on agoric bases, pursuing journalism, academic research, and even television and radio (Lowell Ponte, Ron Kimberling).

Many libertarians also turned inward with incessant psychology sessions and in-group self-criticism. This was the Movement as reflected in 1972 in, say, NEW LIBERTARIAN NOTES, and which could be pieced together from RAP, LIBERTARIAN FORUM, REASON, ACADEMIC ASSOCIATES LETTER, VONULIFE, FREEMAN, SIL NEWS, PACIFIC LIBERTARIAN, and many local newsletters.

But in December of 1971, the political campaign heresy arose again. To put it mildly, Your Friendly Neighborhood Anarcho-columnist was hardly an impartial observer of this weed in our garden. But even then it seemed Obvious to me from where it drew its appeal. First, the need for a public "mass movement" visibility of many libertarians who were otherwise quite sound on doctrine. And, second, there were a lot of newcomers who had not "learned their lesson" in 1968 and were confused enough to believe that freedom can be imposed, i.e., "voted in."

The Libertarian Party should have collapsed as fast as the CRR, since its popular vote was so far below the number of eligible libertarians as to show its rejection and then some.

While it was obvious in N.Y. and Calif., the libertarians in the rest of the country were too scattered to realize their true strength (about 100,000, according to the lists of the time, with less than 10,000 voting for Hospers). Also, the electoral fast shuffle of Roger MacBride diverted attention from the overwhelming rejection of the LP.

Other libertarians campaigned for Nixon (believe it or not), McGovern, Schmitz, and Spock; and I have even heard of one or two who voted for Linda Jenness (Trotskyite). Most libertarians didn't vote, and Sy Leon's League of Non-Voters got excellent coverage on and off.

1973 was the year of the LP. The most viable Opposition seemed to be a radical faction within the LP, though again this was misleading. The radical caucus (RC) was firmly rooted in the anti-political libertarian tradition, and nurtured by all the Movement outside the Party—from LeFevrians to Brownians, and even a token Galombosian!

As soon as a real live political campaign occurred in 1973, disillusionment began and the rc's ranks began to swell. Many partyites simply dropped out immediately. The rc broke away at the state and national LP conventions of 1974. By Spring of 1975 only the smallest state parties on the E. Coast had not suffered a large split, some "splits" involving nearly the entire party. Significantly, those who bolted were often the top activists, newsletter editors, and theoreticians.

The long, painstaking construction of a free society via a Counter-Economy cannot be short-cut then. But, it may yet be argued, is there no way to harness this deep-seated drive to campaign publicly, and to draw in the new recruits that the Goldwater/YAF and McGovern campaigns did? Is there no such thing as a "pure" campaign which can get all the benefits of the LP electioneering, but avoid the deadly problems of monopoly organization, power-tripping, and, ultimately, being Judas Goat for the State?

Obviously, there is Nobody we could run.

Among the myriad programs for reform, revolution, emigration, and escape underground, into the forests, in and under the ocean and to outer space, the Libertarian Caucus Technique (LCT) stands out for one distinguishing characteristic: it has been observed to work.

This paper is not a whole-cloth fabrication or an attempt to apply other modes of successful anti-State action to libertarian requirements. This paper rather puts forward the underlying principles behind an already proven successful tactic so that it may be systematically applied and used where appropriate and necessary.

Like all plans leading to battle, the LCT can be thwarted, and the troops can lose themselves in the process. Since you are fighting for the minds, hearts and souls of others, that is what you are laying on the line.

The key to success of a Libertarian Caucus is *strategic infiltration*. The terms sound cold and calculated and are meant to. Failure to trigger the strategy at the appropriate time—regardless of personal feelings—will blow the technique. It's not for the soft-hearted.

Finally, LCT is political judo. The pivot is the "sanction of the victim," the always-present vulnerable spot in the State apparatus. Like all forms of judo, it requires the opponent coming to you and throwing his weight. You merely adjust the direction of his trajectory so that he lands flat on his back, rather than on top of you.

That requires patience and detachment. The strategic infiltrator can never force the issue, nor can he initiate action (beyond setting up the LC). He must always *respond*, react to the issues that the opposition gives him. Of course, he can be incredibly adept discovering issues where others may not have noticed them. But ego-tripping “leadership” just doesn’t work.

The Libertarian Caucus

Caucus technique is an old political trick, much more prevalent on the Left in the U.S., but cross-spectrum in parliamentary countries. A caucus is simply a gathering of vote-holders *within* a larger voting bloc. A *bloc* or coalition in parliamentary countries votes to keep itself in power. The parties themselves go “into caucus,” but usually they have separate internal caucuses representing their ideological sources of strength. (Notice how close the idea is to the “sanction of the victim.”)

The Conservative Party of Great Britain has a “Monday Club” of free enterprise right-wingers who form a caucus to exert pressure on the Party to maintain ideology in the face of pragmatism. The Labour Party has the Tribune Group which does the same for Leftist ideological purity. The Free Democrats of Germany had both a Left-caucus and a National Liberal Action Right-caucus, though the leaders of the latter have dropped out and joined the Christian Democrats. The Italian Christian Democrats are heavily faction-ridden, and their Left-caucus seeks coalition with Communists while their Right-caucus contemplates the neo-fascists.

In the U.S., one could think of parliamentary examples such as the Wednesday Club, Conservative Study Group, Black Democratic Caucus and so on.

The Students for a Democratic Society, which was an umbrella group of the New Left, was loaded with caucuses: Worker-Student Alliance, Revolutionary Youth Movement, Anarchist Caucus, Independent Socialist Caucus, several Trotskyite caucuses, and so on.

A caucus serves two functions: one for the group as a whole, the other for the caucus members. It serves the former by keeping the caucused faction pacified and part of the group, and it serves the latter by putting forward their position in hopes of making it the dominant one. The first function is realistic and obviously works, at least for a time. The latter is not and does not.

Caucuses which capture temporary control of the American political parties have either gone down to defeat (William Jennings Bryan for the Populists, George McGovern for the radiclubs), sold out (Thomas Jefferson for the Old Republicans, Abe Lincoln for the Free Soilers), Or both (Barry Goldwater for the conservatives). In a case by itself was the takeover of the Peace and Freedom Party by the California “Libertarian” Alliance, where the CLA ended up with a corpse.

Perhaps a group simply organized for taking over a Party would succeed—except that such a “Power Caucus” would not fulfill the first function of gaining the sanction of some principally principled victims. Contradiction.

To defeat this *real* contradiction, the apparent one is given up. The strategists of the Libertarian Caucus enter with the full understanding that they will not take power. In fact, the *less* influence they seem to have, the better for the strategy!

Strategic Goal of the LCT

The goal of libertarian activists is the construction of a viable libertarian society. A viable libertarian society is a collection of individuals who possess the following characteristics: rejection of all claims to their lives and property, refusal to subjugate their selves (egos) into a collective, and acceptance of an alliance with other individuals possessing the first two characteristics for purposes of defense. Any given individual in a libertarian society need not possess these characteristics; but it is *necessary* that a sufficient number do to fulfill the goal.

I need not belabor what is obvious at this point: libertarianism cannot be imposed from the top down. *Failure* to *impose* libertarianism is, in fact, a measure of *success* of libertarianism. Contradiction.

Such collectives as political parties and related ideological organizations and pressure groups operate counter to the libertarian's goals. Thus, the strategic infiltrator has an incomparable advantage if he is a libertarian: he does not fear the destruction of the collective he is infiltrating. In fact, he welcomes it.

With this point driven home, one must point out that the short-term or even medium-range survival of the infiltrated group is a lesser consequence to the strategic infiltrator than his primary goal: to create libertarians, to add to his ranks of allies.

Therefore, the strategic infiltrator employs those tactics which foster rejection of the collectivist ethic, which encourage rejection of self-sacrifice, and which raise the consciousness of the non-aware members to see the concealed fraud and coercion starkly.

The Party members are put through a trauma where they must choose between alternatives which they earlier felt were compatible. At one of these crises, the member will reject membership or embrace it without further reservation. The latter will join the ranks of the enemy. The former, if exposed to libertarian thought along the way, may finally raise their consciousness to your level and join you, or work for your ends on their own.

Some will basically go into shock from the trauma, and simply "Brown out." They reject the reality of the choice but cannot maintain the evasion that the choice is not real. They shut down their brains.

Some Tactics for the Libertarian Caucus Technique

The tactics you work out for use of the LCT are specific to the group you are in. Clearly, a tactic for use in the Student Mobilization Committee Against the War etc. will be different from one usable in the John Birch Society. On the other hand, some tactics in the Democratic Party infiltration may be applicable to Republican Party infiltration.

Let's run through some historical examples and see what worked. The first case attempted never got off the ground, i.e., the RLA infiltration of SDS. The second case, the RLA infiltration of YAF, was incredibly successful.

The infiltrators set up an Anarchist Caucus (AC) to explicitly push the hard-core, pure libertarian position. However, the action was really fought in the "Libertarian" Caucus, where those who felt libertarians could work with the conservative Statists were to be found in large numbers. The "agit-prop" before the Con raised the consciousness of the target group. The literature distributed at the St. Louis Convention was a deliberate incitement to the "Trads" (traditional-

ist conservatives)—*The Tranquil Statement* of the RLA, *The Match!* from SLAM, and Rothbard’s “Listen YAF” in *The Libertarian Forum*. Rothbard explicitly begins his agitation by calling for a Schism—equivalent to “seizing the high ground” in military terms.

The AC brought Karl Hess to speak under the Arch. Some trad called the cops to break up the gathering. The AC exploited their put-upon image and challenged Buckley to debate Hess. Buckley refused, and the AC now had evidence to back their claims that the conservative Trads wanted no compromise with the libertarians. A defection from the LC slate to the Trad National Office slate was picked up and used as evidence that one could not be in both camps.

Still, when *the* issue came up, the Trads throttled back their own hard-liners to pass a wishy-washy position on conscription to give the LCers hope of victory “next time.” The AC struck back with a hard-core position on the draft, which actually got through committee with some sympathetic help to become a minority plank. When it became obvious the delegates were willing to accept compromise over schism, one AC provocateur ignited what appeared to be his draft card. A simple act—but a contradiction with the compromise being voted. The resulting polarisation, split of YAF, and formation of the modern libertarian movement is well-known, but the strategic infiltration is not.

A couple of early attempts by myself to convert what I observed in St. Louis into a science brought inconclusive results—a split in the Anti-War in Cambodia marchers, and the Anarchist Caucus at a Wisconsin Young Republican Convention. A move into the Wisconsin Alliance (a new Leftist party) showed signs of bearing fruit but could not be completed as I left for New York. Just to keep in practice, I split up a YIP chapter at U.W.

In New York, various anti-war groups were infiltrated, but with the exception of the War Tax Resisters, we met with little success. The reason is that we had no common identity with those whom we were seeking to win over. Our vast differences made it nearly impossible to have the “better crowd” see us as articulating their positions consistently, so the power-trippers could appear closer to them. (We did pick up a few anarcho-Leftists at a rally when we started a chant against a Trotskyist Speaker of “Remember Kronstadt! Trotsky was a butcher!”)

Then came the classic success story of strategic infiltration, the break-up of the “Libertarian” Party. I followed the above formula rigorously, with one error, though I knew at the time I was rushing things.

By 1973, the emerging LP had created the image of a small band of anti-politicians on the fringes of the movement, mostly Browne-outs, coral reefers and pacifists, impotent against the politicians. Two years later, the *radical caucus* had succeeded in restoring the anti-political wing of the libertarian movement to at least equal status with the politicians (e.g., *Libertarian Review*’s “Essay Review” debate between Crane and myself), the hard-core, consistent position was conceded to be (or feared to be when not conceded) on the anti-political side, and Party members were purged, shunned and attacked for merely having associated with the powerful and deadly *rc* and myself—a witch-hunt in the classic tradition.

The details of how it was done are in *New Libertarian Notes*, especially issues # 32 & 33; I have no intention of repeating them here. Those reading this publication and seeing the events of 1974 from Hr. Royce’s view now have the answer to their common question. “But what was Konkin after?”

The Costs of Strategic Infiltration

One has to choose between friends, who will not ally, and allies who just aren't going to make good Friends. I did, with regrets, perhaps.

One has to be ready to turn everything into a success. When the "establishment" (call it National Office, call it Trads, call it "Partyarchy," call it bosses—but make sure to delineate a clear, strong, visible enemy) defeats your issue for more principles, charge them with repression. When they accept your reforms, charge them with a co-opt—and immediately hike your demand. The establishment can do no right—which is, in fact, one of the truths you are trying to convey. *Do not ever lose sight of this*—never start thinking that you have a chance to win the enemy over, and that they can't be such bad guys. Then *their* caucus function is working.

One must be ready to smash what one has built. In November 1973, the disaster of the Youngstein campaign swelled the ranks of the *radical caucus* anti-Partyarchy ranks to the point where I foresaw victory for the reformers at the next convention in Spring. I thus resigned. (Two years later they took over and drove Rothbard out—but without the hard-core in their ranks.)

Can others be trusted not to "sell out" if they organize a "strategic Infiltration"? Well, if they have the benefit of watchful support that I had in the LP such as Andy Thornton, Neil Schulman, Abby Goldsmith and others right in the inner circle, maybe. It's a real risk.

Can this strategy work, say, in the Republican Party? I think it can, at least at the lower levels where the idealists man the ranks of pavement pounders. I have no inclination to pursue the strategy any further for the foreseeable future. But for those with strong constitutions, high degrees of control over their emotions, and strong stomachs for the political sewers, you're welcome to the ideas here. Let me know how you do and we can compare notes.

Politics, as the great Frank Chodorov so well analyzed, is the conflict over plunder yet to come. Like him, I am willing to soil my hands in this inescapably rotten, immoral game; and again like him, I would welcome the day when our scorn and derision will be sufficient to deal with politics.

On that day, we shall have the free society for which we long.

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