

Victory in Indianapolis

By Dr. Carl S. Milsted, Jr.

The Libertarian Party has shrunk back down from its Project Archimedes induced growth. The shrinkage may have some worried, but I got tired of worrying a couple of years ago. When I read one of the Project Archimedes outreach letters, I said to myself that the people recruited by this letter are unlikely to stick around after 2000. The letter was full of hype about our presidential candidate getting in the polls and then getting into the debates to turn America around in a Hollywood finale moment. Needless to say, this was a perfect setup for a big letdown.

However, our budget has gotten built up by those temporary numbers, and addiction to that money has set in. While I was on the Strategic Planning Team, I tried on several occasions to suggest we ought to take some time to determine what to *stop* doing in order to make room in the budget for our new strategies. "Never go backwards" was the reply. The theory was that once we had the Strategic Plan in place, we would have something good to write about in fundraising letters and the money would roll in. Instead, we see desperation fundraising letters about keeping our budget from going into the red.

In Indianapolis we got three strategies proposed to get us out of this slump:

1. More blue sky and better hype utilizing lots of Neuro-Linguistic Programming.
2. Hearings and purges of those who write the hype-filled fundraising letters in order to "restore confidence in the ethics of the LP."
3. Apply good business practices to running the national operation more efficiently so that we can operate comfortably within our current fundraising capabilities and then some.

Approach 3 won out. I am a happy man.

There were three corresponding visions of what to do with the money once we got it:

1. More Archimedes-like membership recruiting; more members will solve all our problems.
2. Shut down most of the national office and send the money out to the affiliates; decentralization is the key to victory.
3. The national operation should provide services to the affiliates in those areas where economies of scale allow those services to be more valuable than UMP money.

Option 3 won out. I am a very happy man.

The campaign was hard fought, starting well before the convention as it ought to be. The choice of national chair is the most important thing we do at conventions other than the creative drinking that goes on in the hospitality suites. The candidates representing these visions did so with competence -- even George Phillies who did not look so good in 2000; practice helps it would appear.

And kudos go to Eli Israel for handling his defeat like a grownup. He could be back, and hopefully the LP will be strong enough to implement his blue-sky vision if he is.

The new LNC looks pretty good as well, and they held a real meeting after the convention unlike the abbreviated one in 2000. I did not stay for the whole meeting so I cannot report on its ramifications.

I would also like to note an important addition to our national staff: Eric Caron, our new Development Director. I had a chance to talk with him over drinks and was greatly impressed. He understands the importance of setting realistic goals, *proving* ourselves by accomplishing them, and then raising big dollar donations based on what we have done. He was even talking about getting some big donors to finance *state house races*.

I am an extremely happy man.

The LP may have shrunk down to its natural size, but it is in good hands. The future looks bright.