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Dear FLP Member:

Few events in the history of the libertarian movement have filled me with such a sense of mingled hope and sadness, as last week's FLP state convention.

As the old joke goes, first the good news. Anyone who's read the last three issues of the party newsletter, should be able to infer that there's been quite a bit of internal squabbling and personal feuding going on since the national convention last August. During the first two days of the state convention, much of it seemed to be evaporating for good. Art O'Sullivan and Murray Rothbard were apparently on friendly speaking terms. We were all able to laugh-- to laugh at ourselves, really-- when Ralph Raico congratulated Roy Childs on his "Introduction to Libertarianism", stating, "I've gone over it with a fine-tooth comb, and have been able to find no more than five or six lies." In fact, all the references to things that had been said or done at the national or at the special convention, seemed to be tinged with a good-natured nostalgia. We all wanted to start afresh!

The most exhilarating event of all was the election for Chairperson. Sandy Feld voted for his supposed nemesis, Gary Greenberg. Bob Cassella, who had quit the party a year before it had become fashionable to do so, voted for Lee Schubert. I, myself (presumably part of the "dissident" faction), sensing the growing irrelevancy of the old antagonisms, and anxious to speed their ultimate disappearance, seriously considered nominating Lee for Chair. While Howie Rich (supposedly the arch-Partyarch), perhaps with the same reasons in mind, gave his encouragement to the Draft John Deane movement. When the votes were tallied, John Deane was elected with thirty-six votes, with the twenty-six remaining votes being shared by Lee and Gary. While this may not have been a landslide, John's election certainly was something of a coup. And the very broad coalition that came together behind his candidacy provided further grounds for optimism. The dissolution of factional lines was perhaps most clearly manifested in Ralph Raico's enthusiastic support of John. I felt that this was one election no one had lost. We had all won.

And there were other good omens. When John Deane spoke of working for the national ticket, he evoked applause from the entire convention, including those who had voted, last October, to censure Roger MacBride. I would never have imagined it possible! All notions about "unpledged electors" or of voting against the endorsement of electors, were quickly laid to rest. And to put the icing on the cake, Carolyn Keelen rejoined the party.

But what really excited me about John Deane's election and these other circumstances and events surrounding it, was not so much their symbolic importance, as their potential for some very concrete results. While the party had witnessed "a new dawn" at this convention (or so I thought), I now looked forward to the busy day ahead. If the agenda for the first State Committee meeting is any indication, our new Chairperson certainly has no lack of energy or ideas. The notion

of an upstate Chair is still an idea novel enough to retain some of that euphoric flavor of an experiment. The success of this experiment, I'd hoped, would be something that would inspire an unmatched outburst of activism, that would bring us all back together again-- new talent mingling with old, past differences forgotten. I fervently cling to this hope, and that is one reason why I am writing this letter.

Now, then: what's the bad news? Well, this is a little more difficult for me because, unlike the good news, it involves not my feelings, but those of a number of other people. The best way to begin is by recounting what occurred on Sunday of the convention weekend. The five people elected to the State Committee as at-Large members were Charlie Blood, Guy Riggs, Serena Stockwell, Carl Hastings, and Dennis Schuman. The highest vote for any of these candidates was twenty-three, the lowest was twenty-one. Roy Childs and I both lost, receiving eighteen and nineteen votes, respectively. (Considering the high calibre of the other six candidates, I was very gratified with the number of votes I received.) After the lunch break, I didn't return to the convention for another two or three hours, as I had other business to attend to. When I did return, I was informed that my name and Roy Childs' had been placed in nomination to fill the vacancy on the State Committee caused by the resignation of Charlie Blood. "How's that again?"

From what I've been able to put together, it was like this. A number of members-- Murray Rothbard, Walter Block, Gary Greenberg, Ralph Raico, and perhaps others-- were very upset over Roy's defeat for State Committee. They felt that it was evidence of an intransigent attitude on the part of the segment of the party that was apparently enjoying a majority at this convention; a refusal to accept or to offer any olive branches; a desire to milk every issue and every vote for all it was worth. They were also offended by the intention of certain members -- Charlie Blood, at that time, among them-- to go through with a plan to introduce the "Declaration on Tactics" as an official resolution of policy; the Declaration, of course, contained specific criticisms of statements made by Roy Childs and Murray Rothbard. And so, this group did not return after lunch, and their continued participation in the party became a matter of speculation. "They've gone to the movies", I was told. "And Ralph, too?" That was the unkindest cut of all. What had become of that "fresh start" I'd been looking so forward to?

At any rate, with the departure of Murray, Ralph, Walter, Gary, et al, some people must have begun to realize that they'd really overdone it; and Charlie Blood decided to do something definite about it. He resigned. He felt that we had unwittingly cast in the role of devils, people with whom we merely had certain disagreements. They are not devils, and it is no service to either the party or to our own point of view, to attempt to exorcize them. Apparently, Charlie felt that not electing Roy to the State Committee had been based on a hasty, perhaps knee-jerk, judgment, and that his resignation would give the convention an opportunity to reconsider it. After Charlie resigned, Howard Katz obtained the floor and proceeded to explain why Roy Childs was a devil-- or, at any rate, an unacceptable candidate to him, Charlie's remarks notwithstanding. I'm told it was at this point that Andrea Millen walked out of the convention.

So: this is roughly where I walked in, just as a vote was about to be taken between Roy and myself. I wasn't really able to assimilate

enough information to make any intelligent judgment as to whether I should have withdrawn as a candidate or not. The convention would have to decide, but I wanted to make it clear that, at that point, I didn't care in the slightest if I were elected or not, that my only concern was for the unity and long-run good of the party, and that, though I didn't know for sure, I suspected that the election of Roy Childs would best serve those ends. I made some remarks off the top of my head that, I think, vaguely echoed those sentiments, and then left the room. A while after, I was told that I'd been elected by a margin of one or two votes-- which, for me, merely meant that I would now have to decide for certain whether I had acted rightly in not withdrawing as a candidate.

After getting all the facts, and letting them sink in, I concluded that I had not made the right choice. Thus, I again addressed the convention, this time to announce my intention to resign, effective upon adjournment (in order to avoid another vote). So, it is now up to the full membership (by mail ballot, I'd assume) to fill this vacancy. That being so, you ought to know why I resigned. To begin with, Charlie declined his seat with a very definite purpose in mind, one which I endorse fully: party unity. Hell, movement unity! My election, given the context, did nothing to advance that purpose. There are any number of other individuals whose presence on the State Committee would do more to help heal this most current breach among friends. I urge you to bear these considerations in mind, and to forward any suggestions you might have to Marty Nixon (15 W. 38 St., NYC 10018). A number of names occur to me. Roy Childs, obviously; had only two or three people not been absent, Roy would clearly have won the seat that Charlie declined. Charlie Blood, himself, should be considered eligible; he was elected to the position in the first place, after all. Also, Ralph Raico; more than anyone else, Ralph seems a tangible symbol of the harmony and good will that I hoped would emerge from this convention, and prevail during John Deane's Chairmanship. Both Gary Greenberg and Lee Schubert would fill the bill perfectly. It was unfortunate that three of the FLP's most talented and dedicated members were running for the same spot on the State Committee. The vote totals that Lee and Gary received for Chair in no way reflected the party's high regard for their abilities and for their innumerable services to the party, since its very inception; as I perceived it, John Deane emerged as the preferred of three very qualified candidates, because he seemed most representative of this desire for a "fresh start". But, this fresh start means all of us working together, and I pray that it will include Gary Greenberg and Lee Schubert, as well; frankly, I cannot imagine a Free Libertarian Party without them. And even less am I able to imagine a Free Libertarian Party without Andrea Millen-- I feel I should speak of Andrea separately, and I will in a moment. Another person who comes to mind-- somewhat more of a "dark horse"-- is Danny Shapiro. Danny is one of the very few FLPers who is actually younger than I am, so there's always been sort of a generational bond between us; we were no doubt dismayed to find ourselves on opposite sides of the "veto" controversy, though I know it was a good antidote to any "devil theory" I might have fallen prey to. (I must stress that I have no idea whether any of these people would be willing to accept election to the State Committee. I would be very disappointed, however, if a preferential ballot did not include at least some of these names that I've mentioned. In this balloting, it wouldn't seem at all adequate to restrict choices to declared

candidates. In fact, considering the circumstances surrounding the vacancy, the propriety of actively seeking the position would seem rather debatable.) Again, get in touch with Marty as soon as possible, if you have any suggestions.

So, what about all this? So far, I've simply reported the bad news: that a number of people feel that they or their friends have been slighted and/or personally maligned. Is this feeling justified? To a very substantial degree, I think it is-- otherwise, I wouldn't have resigned. But perhaps "justified" is not the best word to use here. For, I feel fully confident in saying that, where insult was taken, there was never any deliberate intention of giving any. Is this feeling understandable, then? And here the answer is an unqualified "Yes".

It is scarcely my intention to pretend that there have not been very real differences of opinion within the party, these past several months. I do not apologize for the opinions I have held or expressed in the past (and those include many that were regarded as heretical by the other signers of the Declaration on Tactics). I do not expect anyone to apologize for their opinions. What I do regret-- belatedly, I admit-- is the insensitive manner in which many of us, on both sides of the controversies, often chose to express our opinions; and I apologize deeply for any part I may have had in encouraging this manner of advocacy. I stress that the fault here does not rest solely with any one faction. Many of my friends have suffered personal attacks; I think of Art O'Sullivan, in particular. One needn't look far to find examples of rather heavy-handed invective levelled against the "purists"; though such attacks frequently omitted specifying particular individuals, they were not ~~as~~ that account any less offensive or unfair to those against whom they were clearly aimed.

But, forgive me: I don't wish to cast any stones here. It may have been true that, as Sam Konkin put it, one faction of the party took out its "long knives" at the October special convention. But I think we should all have come to realize, by now, that that faction is not the only one that has wielded "long knives", and that "purists" are not the only people who bleed when they are stuck. Let's put away the knives. If we have disagreements, let's discuss them rationally and openly, without fear, distrust, or personal bitterness. When this is done, disagreements frequently never occur in the first place.

Yes, I'm afraid that, motivated by some very legitimate concerns, we did go too far. We were insensitive. But without meaning to be. This insensitivity is the inevitable by-product of being part of a faction-- and we acquired it unawares. For instance, considering it in the cold light of day, I find it hard to believe that we actually intended to introduce the Declaration on Tactics, with the "specifications", as a resolution of party policy. True, I had privately expressed some reservations about the idea; but I really didn't oppose it. One doesn't feel quite the same personal responsibility for decisions arrived at by a group. Thus, the statements, actions, and decisions of a group, will often exhibit a degree of insensitivity that is not to be found in any of the individual members of a group.

I cannot stress this enough, because many of the people who apparently feel personally hurt by certain events, are people for

whom I happen to have a great deal of respect and high personal regard-- occasional disagreements notwithstanding. If I were to speak of them personally, it would only be in positive terms. I am thinking particularly of Ralph Raico, Gary Greenberg, Andrea Millen, Lee Schubert, Murray Rothbard, Roy Childs, and Fran Youngstein. (I am thinking also of Carolyn Keelen, Susan Corkery, and Art O'Sullivan, but that's another matter.) Ralph and Lee deserve credit for their rare ability to keep issues and personalities separate, and for never losing their sense of humor. To Roy Childs, I may owe more of a philosophical debt than I had realized; I don't recall any precise moment at which I became aware I was no longer a "minarchist", but I do know that the process was accelerated and concluded within the three or four weeks following the famous Childs-St. John debate. It is just -- well, unfair, I suppose-- that of all the things Roy has said or written over the years, he should be so well-remembered for a single, off-the-cuff remark, that has been so widely misunderstood. If his point was that our views are prone to be distorted if they are expressed carelessly, he certainly proved it. Roy's remark was perhaps careless (but he did only have three minutes to say what he had to say), and perhaps it was insensitive. But his explanation at the Laissez-Faire Bookstore in February, should have been acceptable to all who heard it. While one might wish to challenge him on the theoretical point, (as Virginia Walker did), he made it clear that on immediate tactical questions, he didn't have any major disagreements with the arguments made by the so-called "purists". Whether this came from a clarification or a reversal of his originally expressed views on dealing with the media, I'll not attempt to judge; in either case I'm satisfied. I wish this statement of Roy Childs' would be as well remembered as any other he has made: "I do not advocate that the Libertarian Party lie." What more can one ask?

I know this letter is getting too long, but I do want to finish what I've begun. And I am not bending over backwards to be conciliatory. There is not a single sentiment contained here, regarding any of these individuals, that I have not at one time or another expressed privately to Art or Carolyn or Charlie or Howard.

Speaking in his own behalf at the convention, Gary Greenberg drew laughter and applause when he stated, "I don't regard the election of a Chairperson as a popularity contest"-- and after a pause-- "I realize that judgment may seem self-serving." And, indeed: Gary is Gary. But Gary is also one of the hardest workers the FLP has. And what's more, he is scarcely as-- abrasive? aloof?-- as he might sometimes appear on the surface. During the mutual paranoia of the days immediately following the national convention, I must have had a brief relapse of sanity, during which I wrote Gary a letter, in which I tried to clear the air about what I imagined to be personal hostility between us. Gary's detailed and thoughtful reply showed deep concern. It contained much that, in retrospect, I wish I had taken more truly to heart. (But there were those "long knives"-- oh, but there I go again!)

I don't know Fran Youngstein that well personally. But I do have vivid memories of the 1973 mayoral campaign. If Fran ever decides to be a candidate again, for any office whatsoever, we should not only print it in the newsletter-- we should shout it from the rooftops!