

Success beyond Debate

A strategy proposal by
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Ron Paul's success in this election bid can be based on his inclusion in the debates and the resultant discussions on the internet and talk shows.. Yes, going from less than half of one percentage point in 1988 to 4-8% is just one sign, not a statistical anomaly. Even forgetting the e-mail polls, the amount of money he's raised, or the positive media response; just count up the hits that he is getting on news sites. There is more publicity for Ron now than in all previous LP presidential campaigns combined and it even isn't an election year yet. Showing our ideas, as in a non-confrontive panel or in a feisty debate helps expose our views more than any other strategy and has been since the beginnings of our movement. The new media is a raising of this debate power in geometric progression.

I remember setting up a panel at a YAF conference in the spring of 1969 to show the spectrum of conservatism with such luminaries as Frank S. Meyer, who founded the term conservatism as a fusion of libertarianism and traditionalism, Henry Paolucci, former Conservative candidate and professor as the traditionalist, Jerome Tuccille, then identified with the Objectivist movement and Karl Hess who had recently came from conservatism to libertarianism. This event was pivotal in helping young conservatives and Objectivists to become libertarian (Sheldon Richman comes to mind), even Tuccille, who was on the panel, noted that he came over to our side during that panel discussion as noted in his book; "It Usually Starts with Ayn Rand". More importantly was the founding of a libertarian caucus within YAF at that event that broke off that summer. That was the beginning of our movement.

As many people know the debates between Badnarik, the Libertarian Party candidate and Cobb, the Green Party candidate, resulted in increased friendship and co-operation in 2004. Many Greens voted for us where Cobb was denied ballot status but more importantly the left media noted and approved our co-operation, our independence from the conservatives which resulted in better news coverage. They hailed the candidates when they were later arrested together as a significant gesture of civil disobedience. I was proud to help organize the debates and arrange for a booth at the Green Party conventions in 2002 and 2004. Much of this happened during my house arrest while awaiting sentencing.

This was the most successful tactic of that election year and was repeated by some local candidates. We staged our own events rather than just waiting to be invited to the establishment parties' circuses. When we show an independence of thought and action with others who are excluded that commands interest and respect. Americans and much of the media want to see a contrast of ideas as well as just new ones. We know who has the ideas that will change society and the Republicans and Democrats don't have them which is why they will try to exclude us. We must continue to participate in and design events that show the necessity and excitement of including us in all discussions of politics. Ron Paul should continue his strategy of including himself in all of these discussions whether of evangelicals, bloggers, blacks etc as long as there is interest and a decent audience.

A similar strategy should then start soon with left, anti-war Democrats with our hero, Ron Paul, on the panels. They should want Paul on since he has shown in the debates and the respect he has gotten by left and right media for his willingness to confront Bush doctrines while supporting peace and liberty. That Paul can do this by using conservative sounding arguments and raise much support should intrigue them. They should see that libertarian ideas can be a wedge to divide disaffected conservatives and give them talking points. Our involvement in panels with left luminaries will be just as impressive in displaying our ideas as the GOP events. The left media and supporters will respect us even more and get us more publicity, access and support. The fact that Paul can get

applause from such divergent sources is our big claim to the media's attention as well as individual curiosity

My vision is this: Get Ron Paul to debate Richardson or Edwards (the top tier candidates may not be interested and we might have to settle for Gravel or Kucinich) at a large university. The event would be sponsored by Harpers, Atlantic Monthly, Mother Jones or the Nation or other liberal print media with support from think tanks, anti-war activist groups and/or MoveOn.com as well. George Soros could also be contacted on this. We also include our largest resources; (Reason, CATO, Independent Institute, antiwar.com etc.) to work with theirs with input from the university and local media, including bloggers. There could be a distinguished authors, professors and retired military people on the panels as well that would lend expertise, diversity and publicity to the discussion. We should have the best of their representatives on the panel. To get respect we must have the best available. The limits of discussion and those who would participate in the panel discussion and questioners from the media would be decided based upon who is making this event happen. We are defining by the composition of this panel the fact of our inclusion in the respectable spectrum of the peace wing of this country

The making of this event is a show of strength organizationally, intellectually and in support. So we should be prepared to help in finance, aid in logistics, publicity as well as getting our crowd there and expect the same from others involved. There should be adequate space for a large crowd as well as booths for responsible, involved groups to function as a market place of ideas and information as well as a media area. This event could have thousands of anti-war activists attending, as well as students and others new to ideas visiting our booths and having conversations with us in what we all see as a friendly environment. This should result in exchanging names and information as well as recruiting and influencing opportunities which should result in networking to give us more speaking engagements and other new projects to help stop the war and other infringements of our liberty. Remember that 2008 will see the Democrats win big time. There should be streaming video as well as a print record on line. A poll of those attended as well as an online poll could be done. This could also be an all day or weekend conference with breakout discussions on various issues with the panel as the main attraction. Most of these smaller workshops etc. will also be offering opportunities to spread ideas and energy.

This event will probably be broadcast by PBS and/or NPR since their listeners and contributors are very interested or involved in this issue C-SPAN and CNN might want to be involved as well as local media stations. The university's publicity department, its alumnae and the university media can be expected to do a lot for this event. The media should also be consulted in the making of this event. The panel should show a variety of opinion reflecting the respectable anti-war spectrum and not be stacked in our favor, even if we could get away with it. The spectrum could be gradual withdrawal vs. immediate, complete pullout as well as libertarian and left visions of foreign policy, knowing that that you can find good people on both sides. Marxists and those who do not have large support should be excluded if possible so as to not muddy up the spectrum and have people identify extreme weird positions with the event.. Should there be some Lieberman type who might defend a Democratic version of neo conservatism as a way to defend Israel or democracy? I would say not to have one except as a foil to represent what the new Clinton presidency might be. The peace movement is agreed on withdrawal in Iraq as we were agreed on withdrawal from Vietnam The dynamic is "How do we get out?" rather than "Do we get out?"

I propose as a title and/or subject "What should a policy of peace look like?" The emcee could be Amy Goodman, host of 'Democracy Now' which is heard on many community radio stations including the left Pacifica chain as well as cable. A better selection would be retired PBS host Bill Moyers who had shown much respect to Ron Paul on his old show. My choice would be my friend of more than twenty years, Margot Adler, host of National Public Radio's "Justice Talking". This is broadcast on over a 100 NPR stations including Armed Forces networks. Her program is usually a debate format and has included many noteworthy libertarians so she knows us well.

There could be a panel of distinguished media people asking questions, each of whom would be lending the gravity, support and publicity of their sponsoring organizations. The questions could go beyond Iraq, Afghanistan or Iran. There could be inquiries about handling Darfur and recent tragedies such as Rwanda, Burma, and North Korea as well. The drug war as an important factor in Afghanistan, investments in countries that violate human rights, foreign aid, military spending, combating terrorism, tyranny and the spread of nuclear weapons are all potential discussion points. I would expect that every media and institution wanting to participate would have the desire and ability to give the event support and publicity as everyone is curious in finding the best ways to deal with these problems.

There could be more than one event like this since many universities will recognize this as a potential gold mine for attracting students, faculty and publicity to their institutions as well as fulfilling their liberal agenda. So there could be panels or debates every month or even every week during this time of spring when there is historically much student activism as well as election concerns focusing on America's crisis's. There is a large potential market here for interesting discussions on civil liberties (at some prestigious law school), economic policy (George Mason or University of Chicago), health care, crime, trade and other issues. We could have different think tanks and media handle different issues since these events will be huge and could be their biggest events of the year for the universities and think tanks alike. There could be a booth rental fee that might be waived for those who provide help to the event

The timing of this will probably be in winter or spring as the R's and D's settle on their candidates and drift to the center. One could even hold these events in Iowa, New Hampshire etc and follow the trail of primary and caucus states giving these events even more importance. These events could stretch the seasonal political interest longer after it is obvious who will be the nominees. It is my hope that this chain of events could be an election year tradition

This could also be the time that the Unity'08 party or Bloomberg make their move. This could result in another John Anderson like candidacy that in 1980 appeared radical but said nothing important and crowded out our message. Events such as these panels considered here can help head off such channeling of potential support from us since this would expose centrist lightweights or give us publicity parity to them if they are included.

There could also be a popular conservative third party candidate if Giuliani gets the nod and this also has possibilities. Many of the top GOP contenders avoided a family values event already while Paul did attend. The Constitution Party is a respectable conservative party that seems to be based on the American Conservative magazine and would appeal to Christian conservatism and may be the vehicle for such an attempt. We got along with them in 2004. Many of them are anti-war, anti-Patriot Act and believe in allowing every state to have its own drug policy and are quite familiar with our positions. If there is a good credible effort with a known candidate we could do the same type of events with their candidate on Christian colleges with help from the conservative and Christian media. PBS and NPR might do this one as well and even mainstream universities and institutions might be interested.

Going back to the left anti-war event I see no loss here even if we have to share a platform with Kucinich or Gravel rather than Edwards or Richardson. (Michael Moore says he favors Kucinich's health care proposal) Nader would even be worth debating or having on a panel since he still gets a lot of respect and he does respect us. There is an expectation here that Ron Paul does run on the LP ticket in November 2008. It is important that he get prominence over other third parties and independents and that is not a given even though the Greens and Nader tanked last election. Nader's 1996 and 2000 efforts were based on the Greens who were basically a rerun of the Citizen's Party which did poorly in the 80's, so it is possible we may see a continuing cycle of the rise and fall and rise again of left third parties. We need to identify new movements quickly and work with them as well as debate them so that they are familiar with our thinking, will co-operate with us and speak well of us to their friends. This would also have them at least consider objections by our arguments as they consider new policy proposals. Our participation and setting up such panel is that it could be

our biggest opportunity to correct mistaken ideas on health care, welfare and education. This also sharpens our debating and persuasion skills. To do this requires us to construct a friendly environment and work with them on some issues so that there is some identification on mutual values such as peace, civil liberties and decentralization of power in order for them to accept our economic arguments based on liberty, efficiency and the desire to reduce the state. This is brokering based on ideals and information.

Two other very important successes can result from this strategy. The first is that we will finally be considered the neo-conservatives' true opposition in the GOP finally supplanting the dying liberal or moderate winglets. We may even be better placed to deal with the Religious Right than the neo-cons since Bush has crashed and burned the GOP and sold out conservatism in the process. This could be the basis for future libertarians winning GOP nominations

The other is that we will be the entry or guide to what intelligent conservatism is according to the liberals. This will be very important since the Democrats will control Congress and the presidency in 2009 and have enormous weight in academia and a lot of media. We will be the ones chosen by intelligent fair-minded liberal media hosts as the opposition to big government plans rather than the dumb big government conservatives and their uninformed talk show claue. Since we are already respected by many conservative opinion leaders we will be seen as the meeting point between right and left. This benefit cannot be overstated

Should we debate the Green's expected 2008 nominee former congresswomen McKinney? I would say yes if we are again shut out of the debates between the R's and D's. I am also assuming that the Greens have not self destructed, have a credible campaign and have gotten the minimum standard of previous debates of being on enough ballots so that they could conceivably win. The Greens like last election may fail to qualify ballot status in some states or beset by divisions. By showing them the respect of debating them they will think well of us to give us their respect which could mean more support.

Debates or panels can establish the spectrum of ideological options. Debates actually work better to convince people than a one sided panel or speaker. This was once proved during the Second World War in an experiment where people heard a debate on whether the war would be long or short vs. hearing a speaker taking one side. Those who heard a debate rather than just one side came more confidently to an opinion. We need to be included in more debates and on both sides of the left-right spectrum. We also need to work with respected others in constructing these debates and panels and in making them as successful, well attended and well received shows. And these are shows so it is important to consider media, production and entertainment values as well as just the intellectual.

There should also be friendliness, if possible, with the opposition. In just creating such events we will establish a working relationship and get much friendly advice and contacts that we can use in our workings on other issues with the left and right, EVEN ON ISSUES WHERE THEY OPPOSE US.

The more you know about those who oppose you the more you know how to change them or work around them. You must address their fears and concerns as well as their mistaken assumptions and arguments. The more types of people you are seen as working comfortably with the more you will be seen as a good negotiator. That ability is an important quality for those who wield power whether in a legislature or a marketplace. The most thrilling times and the most productive times that I have ever had as a libertarian was finding how to reach a principled agreement with those who had differed with me. This is negotiation. This is the selling of an ideal. I want you to have that same sense of satisfaction. So please put this idea in operation and let me know what results happen.

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