

Oh, the Negativity!

By Carl S. Milsted, Jr.

I have recently received some worried feedback by a longtime activist whom I greatly respect. He said my essay could worsen morale and cost us members. This is a legitimate concern and deserves addressing.

For I *have* become greatly negative on doing the impossible. This was not always so. I have been in the party over 20 years and over most of that time have followed the party line. I have many times given the pep talks on how we will eventually get big enough to win, that our 0.4% is just a first step, that adding to that 0.4% is not wasting one's vote since it sends a message, and so forth. And during the time that I was "positive" and followed the party line, I did educate some voters, got some to vote, and recruited exactly *one* new member. Since I have "gone negative" the results have been rather better. Here in the Home of Bunk, the nexus of my negativity, the party is growing.

For you see, I have become negative on what is obviously impossible and pointless to most humans. I have become negative on:

- Running candidates with 1-2% of the budget of the major party opponents.
- Trying to convince people to vote for Libertarians while explaining to them that their vote doesn't count.
- Trying to get people to drop all their values in favor of following a particular theory of natural rights.
- Trying to convince people that it is better to risk having the next war here on home soil than to pay taxes and some number of soldier's lives on preemptive wars overseas.

But being positive on the above is really not being all that positive, anyway. Because most people find the above so unbelievable, such expressions of faith have limited impact. True, pointing out that lottery tickets are a path to the poorhouse can be demoralizing -- to those who sincerely believe in lottery tickets as the path to riches. But the better way to boost morale is to point out the more realistic alternatives to acquiring wealth.

I am *up* on the LP! I am *up* and extra positive because I have learned that the near impossible tasks we have set for ourselves are not necessary. For instance,

- We do not have to grow as large as the RP or DP in order to bring about liberty. Indeed, we can start right now with existing resources.
- We do not have to convert the masses to libertarianism to turn the tide of tyranny.
- There are *several* ways around the "lesser of two evils" dilemma.
- There are gaping loopholes in the campaign finance laws we can exploit.
- We do not all have to move to South Dakota or Delaware to have an effect.

- We do not need to change people's fundamental values.
- We do not need to attack love of the environment nor do we need to defend Murray Rothbard's anti-environmental theory of property rights.
- We do not need to attack religion or altruism, nor do we need to promulgate Ayn Rand's unsettling ethical theories.
- We do not need to await an economic or social collapse to begin to turn things around.
- We do not need proportional representation or other such election reforms. We do not even need to make third party politics viable. In a large number of races we are the second party *right now!*

Maybe it is because I am a scientist vs. a salesman or some such, but my morale can be boosted by a double negative just as much as a straight positive – more so if the double-negative is more credible. The history of the LP is filled with instances of freedom lovers joining our bandwagon and then jumping off after realizing the futility of our pyramid-scheme growth model. This list includes former LNC members and even chairmen of our party.

What I am trying to offer is a considerably more sustainable positive outlook – one that is not predicated on everyone accepting it on faith. It is an outlook that attempts to stand on its own merits and is willing to subject itself to a critical eye and a scientific test. For those who have not read the earlier essays of this series, please visit <http://www.quiz2d.com/essays/lfa> . Note that the core theme is one of hope: hope based not on denying the seriousness of past failures, but hope based on the fact that we have options other than simply working harder and hoping things somehow go our way despite the incredibly long odds.