

Eric  
FYI re  
L.A. Mayor  
campaign. Call  
me if you need  
more info  
DPB

DAVID P. BERGLAND  
ATTORNEY AT LAW  
IMPERIAL BANK BUILDING  
895 TOWN CENTER DRIVE SUITE 900  
COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA 92626  
(714) 751-8980

January 14, 1981

Melinda Pillsbury Foster  
7919 Chimineas  
Reseda, CA 91335

RE: Earl Smith Candidacy for L. A. Mayor

Dear Melinda:

You have probably already heard that I have made requests to Earl Smith and Bob Lehman that Earl withdraw as a candidate for Mayor of Los Angeles. I understand that you played some part in recruiting Earl and so I wanted to share my thoughts with you, as well as a number of other L. P. activists in the Los Angeles area, in the hope that it will have the desired effect.

Earl Smith's candidacy will hurt the Libertarian Party and movement a great deal; not because he isn't capable of making the case for libertarian alternatives, but for reasons having to do with how the L.P. will be perceived for having selected Earl as its candidate in this "non-partisan" election.

Consider the following. Earl is black and the L.P. is lily-white. The L. A. Mayoral election is one of the most significant in the country. In California, it is a close second to an election for Governor. Tom Bradley is the most highly respected black office-holder in the U.S. His prestige among blacks is enormous. By comparison, Earl is not prestigious or particularly qualified (and we don't have a Jesse Jackson or Tom Sowell to replace him). The L.P. desperately needs to generate interest, sympathy and support for itself with minorities.

Bradley and other blacks like L.A. Councilman Farrell can be approached through other avenues and educated to consider libertarian solutions to local problems.

Realistically, Bradley will be elected, so any libertarian's candidacy must be for educational purposes. In light of all the foregoing, what will the educational effects be of Earl's campaign?

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I have spent time and effort doing my homework on this question with substantial members of the black community. The short answer is: disaster. It will be perceived as a racist slap in the face to blacks by a group of outright bigots or people too stupid to recognize their own bigotry. Questions have been put to me, such as: "Why would you run your only black against the most popular person in the black community in Los Angeles?" "Why not save Earl and run him against a racist white conservative somewhere?" "Can't you see that blacks will think libertarians are insensitive racist jerks for doing this?" Is this a Klan plot to drive a wedge between the L.P. and the black community?"

To elaborate on that last thought - the observation has been made to me that if someone were to set out to devise a plan to keep the L.P. lily-white by offending the intelligent leadership in the black community, running Earl Smith against Tom Bradley for Mayor of L.A. would be a great way to do it. Please consider the detriment to us if the press goes to work on the racist implications of the situation and starts publicizing that as well as the negative reactions from the black community. Those stories could go nationwide.

What we have here is a perfect example of why there is a great need to educate libertarians about how to recognize and deal with situations that have implications for libertarian/minority relationships. We have no minority involvement as yet because libertarians haven't done their homework regarding minorities and have therefore screwed up opportunities to expand the L.P.'s appeal into minority communities. (This is a subcategory of what I have seen as a generalized failing on recruitment among L.P. activists.)

For this reason, I have spent much of my own time, effort and money working to create an effective, coordinated, nationwide minority outreach program for the libertarian movement. Obviously, the Smith candidacy hurts that effort for all the reasons stated.

I do not mean by any of the foregoing to attack Earl personally or imply that he is not good candidate material in the right election. It is time, however, for us all to wake up and grow up into political maturity. (I am distressed that Earl did not see the importance of conferring with me in my position as Chairman of the L.P. Minority Outreach Committee when he was first approached by

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you about running.)

I will close with two requests. Please join me in persuading Earl to withdraw. Please alert all libertarians to check with me whenever anything comes up that may impinge upon our minority outreach project.

Yours for Liberty,

DAVID P. BERGLAND  
L.P. National Chair

cc: Earl Smith  
Bob Lehman  
Others