

THE LIBERTY UNION  
PO BOX 602  
ESSEX JUNCTION, VT. 05452  
FEBRUARY 11, 1974

DEAR FRIEND,

THE LIBERTY UNION IS PRESENTLY ENGAGED IN ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FIGHTS IN OUR FOUR YEAR HISTORY. WE ARE FIGHTING TO DEFEAT A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT WHICH WILL APPEAR ON THE TOWN MEETING BALLOT ON MARCH 5TH. THIS AMENDMENT WOULD EXTEND THE LENGTH OF TERM THAT THE GOVERNOR, AND ALL STATE-WIDE OFFICE HOLDERS, SERVE FROM TWO YEARS TO FOUR YEARS.

IT IS OUR STRONG BELIEF THAT WHAT THIS NATION AND STATE NEEDS IS MORE DEMOCRACY, NOT LESS DEMOCRACY. GOVERNMENT IS ALREADY TOO FAR REMOVED FROM THE PEOPLE AND TO LENGTHEN THE TERM OF THE GOVERNOR WOULD ONLY FURTHER ACCENTUATE THE ALIENATION AND POLITICAL IMPOTENCE WHICH PEOPLE PRESENTLY FEEL. IF WATERGATE HAS PROVEN ANYTHING, IT IS THAT OUR "LEADERS" ARE ALREADY TOO FAR REMOVED FROM US. WE MUST STRIVE TO BRING THEM CLOSER TO HOME, NOT FURTHER AWAY.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE ENTIRE LEADERSHIP OF VERMONT'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY, AND MOST OF THE LEADERSHIP OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY, ARE ACTIVELY SUPPORTING THIS AMENDMENT. IT WILL BE A TOUGH FIGHT BUT WE CAN WIN. VERMONTERS ARE SMARTER THAN "LEADERS" THINK THEY ARE. IF PEOPLE ARE INTERESTED IN HELPING IN THIS CAMPAIGN, PLEASE DROP US A LINE. THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF WORK THAT HAS TO BE DONE AND WE ARE GOING TO NEED ALL THE HELP WE CAN GET. IN ORDER TO WAGE AN EFFECTIVE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THIS AMENDMENT WE ARE ALSO GOING TO NEED MONEY. WE HAVE ALREADY PRINTED UP POSTERS AND LEAFLETS, BUT WE ARE GOING TO NEED MONEY FOR PRINTING COSTS, AND FOR THE RADIO ADVERTISING WHICH WE WOULD LIKE TO DO. WE REALIZE THESE ARE HARD TIMES FOR MANY PEOPLE BUT IF YOU HAVE ANY MONEY TO SPARE, WE WOULD APPRECIATE SOME OF IT. THE RESULTS OF THIS FIGHT WILL AFFECT THE ENTIRE FUTURE OF THE STATE.

A FOUR YEAR TERM WOULD MEAN CAMPAIGN PROMISES THAT NOBODY REMEMBERED FOUR YEARS AFTER THEY WERE SAID. IT WOULD MEAN GREATER CONTROL OF THE GOVERNMENT BY THE UTILITIES, THE BANKS, THE REAL ESTATE INTERESTS AND BIG BUSINESS. THESE PEOPLE HAVE THE MONEY TO HIRE FULL TIME LOBBYISTS IN MONTPELIER TO MAKE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVE TO THEIR NEEDS. WHAT DOES THE AVERAGE WORKING PERSON HAVE TO MAKE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIVE TO HIS/HER NEEDS? ONLY THE VOTE - AND IF WE GAVE UP THE RIGHT TO VOTE FOR GOVERNOR MORE THAN JUST ONCE EVERY FOUR YEARS, IT WOULD MAKE US EVEN MORE POLITICALLY IMPOTENT THAN WE ARE AT PRESENT.

A RADIO AD ON THE ST. JOHNSBURY STATION WILL COST ABOUT \$1.50 FOR 30 SECONDS, AND A RADIO AD ON WJOY WILL COST ABOUT \$5. CAN YOU HELP US BUY SOME OF THESE ADS? CHECKS CAN BE MAILED TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.

YOURS TRULY,

*Bernard Sanders*

BERNARD SANDERS  
CHAIRPERSON

VOTE NO ON PROPOSAL ONE ON MARCH 5TH

PRESERVE THE 2 YEAR TERM

THE LIBERTY UNION urges you to

Vote NO on Proposal #1  
on Town Meeting Ballot - March 5<sup>th</sup>

PRESERVE THE TWO YEAR TERM FOR: GOVERNOR,  
Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Secretary  
of State, Treasurer, Auditor

ONE CHANCE TO VOTE EVERY FOUR YEARS IS NOT ENOUGH

On the March 5th Town Meeting Ballot there will be 5 Amendments to the Vermont Constitution. Proposal One will seek to change the terms of office for the Governor, Lt. Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, Treasurer, and Auditor of Accounts from the present two year term to a four year term.

The Liberty Union urges you to vote against this measure which would further remove the politicians from the people who they are supposed to represent. If Watergate and the Viet Nam War have taught us anything, it is that our elected officials are too far removed from the people, and that big business and corporate industry dominate the political process.

The special interests are not only limited to influencing national politics. Here in Vermont, the politicians are unduly influenced by the real estate and development industry; the banking, investment, and insurance interests; and the telephone and utility lobbyists. A 4 year term can only serve to further insulate the politicians from the electorate.

Some of the proponents of the 4 year term put forth the arguments that Proposal One would save money, and that political campaigns are too long and detract from the business of government. The answer to the problem of overly long election campaigns is not to have them every 4 years but to have shorter campaigns. The argument that it would save money to have elections every 4 years instead of every 2 is frightening. Can we seriously put a price on democracy? We would not consider having elections every 8 or 10 years to save money. The answer is to limit campaign spending, not to limit the frequency of elections.

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## THE LIBERTY UNION

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Todd Hanley

The Liberty Union is a radical third party in the state of Vermont. It was formed in 1970 to offer a substantive alternative to the Republican and Democratic parties. Since then it has run candidates in the last three elections, and engaged in non-electoral fights. (A recent controversy over telephone rates is a case in point; see below.)

The number of votes gained by L.U. people has increased in each election. Last fall 16 local and four statewide candidates ran for offices ranging from town representative to governor. One of the purposes of Liberty Union is to enlist low income people - farmers, workers and students - to run for offices themselves, and this effort has met with some success.

Vermont presents people doing radical political work with several unique conditions. It is small, with a population of only 430,000. The legislature meets for only two months a year. State government is relatively small and accessible. While several hundred people at a public hearing would have little or no effect in an urban area, in Vermont they can send shock waves through the entire state bureaucracy. And, most importantly, running for office is not such a huge affair as elsewhere; it gives the Liberty Union an easy method of reaching thousands of Vermonters with a radical analysis. Liberty Union candidates do not face a huge machine; they can pressure opposing politicians into talking about the real issues in a campaign. In public debate the effect is invaluable. During campaigns there is tremendous access to Vermonters through debates, television, radio and newspapers.

During the last three campaigns, no Liberty Union people have been elected, but they have appeared before thousands of Vermonters, and many of the ideas which Liberty Union pioneered have gained widespread support, and so has Liberty Union. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Liberty Union is a force in Vermont politics today. Liberty Union's potential is underscored by the contrasting bankruptcy of the traditional parties in their efforts to solve Vermont's problems.

And Vermont has problems. It is poor. The mean family income is \$10,099. Close to 80,000 Vermonters are below or close to the poverty line set by the Federal government. Tens of thousands more do not earn enough, "necessary to maintain health, social well-being, nurture of children and participation in community activities", as described by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Unemployment is high; in

some areas as high as 12%. Only 17% of the work force is organized into unions; and that number is decreasing in the face of attacks on the construction unions. Many Vermonters work for \$1.60 and \$1.75 per hour, and some live by any means available.

Furthermore, prices in Vermont are extremely high. Food costs rival the highest anywhere in the country; fuel costs are higher in the northeast than elsewhere, and Vermonters pay the highest combined state and local taxes per \$1000 of personal income of any state in the country. Business and the rich do not pay their fair share of taxes, and one of the reasons for poverty in Vermont is very simple: Poor people in the state subsidize the rich.

Much of Vermont is owned by large out-of-state corporations. Vermont offers unique opportunities for business investment through so-called "tax stabilization" agreements. These agreements allow towns to grant, upon authority of 2/3 of a town meeting or referendum, 3 kinds of tax breaks to businesses. A firm's taxes may be assessed either (1) on a percentage of its actual worth; or (2) on the basis of the present year's rate, for up to 10 years -- even if the rate for everyone else doubles during that time; or (3) on the basis of a figure decided upon by the local government.

The amount of business and commercial property getting a tax break in one of these 3 ways in Vermont was \$12,000,000 in 1965, \$41,000,000 in 1968, and \$81,000,000 in 1970. The percentage of state revenue thus derived from business taxes has been declining, while the percentage of state revenue derived from the regressive sales tax has risen; there are only 7 states with a lower percentage of their tax revenues obtained from business. Since the working people of Vermont have little or no control over their local governments right now, or over the businesses which employ them, their conditions are deteriorating as they continue to pay their own share of taxes as well as that of the corporations. Even the federal government gets ripped off: utilities such as the telephone company can write off the taxes they do pay as business costs. (Most of the data on Vermont taxes given above was taken from Lee Webb's The Swindling of the Average Taxpayer: The Story of Taxes in Vermont. A free copy can be obtained by writing him c/o Plainfield Vermont. Additional copies cost 20¢.)

Vermont need not be poor. Its people are very hard working and creative; but they have no means as yet of breaking the power of the small, rich elite who control the commerce of Vermont and its major institutions. This is where the potential of Liberty Union lies.

In the coming years, Liberty Union must build a strong party organization, enlisting new people into a permanent commitment. And

that is a difficult task. One step toward this goal has been taken since the last election through Liberty Union's engagement in several important non-electoral campaigns.

The first was a struggle against the telephone company. New England Telephone Company requested a 38% to 54% increase in basic monthly rates, and a 20% increase on in-state toll calls. The previous year it had been granted a 15% increase in in-state toll calls. It costs more to call from one end of the state to another than to call coast to coast.

The Public Service Board (PSB) must grant or refuse all utility requests, and it scheduled five public hearings around the state to hear public testimony. Usually one or two people showed up at a hearing and the request would be granted quickly. However, this time, utilizing a petition drive and organizing people in each area, Liberty Union succeeded in attracting hundreds of angry people to each meeting. This is totally unprecedented in Vermont.

Many people who hadn't known before that there was such a thing as a Public Service Board showed up; and the low-income people and senior citizens were especially vocal. The phone company was an ideal target, since its board of directors is drawn from the ruling elite of New England.

In Vermont, 6 months after a utility has requested an increase it may implement that increase if the case has not yet been decided, providing they put up enough money under bond to repay consumers if the decision eventually goes against the utility company. Due in large part to tremendous public opposition, the case had not yet been settled when the 6 month deadline was up, and the phone company requested that it be allowed to implement the increase under bond. In this same time period Liberty Union had taken a gamble. It enlisted the support of several low income groups, senior citizen's organizations, and the Vermont Public Interest Research Group, to organize the Vermont Telephone Boycott Committee. LU felt that the support was there to get the needed 2,000 - 3,000 people who would pledge to refuse to pay the rate increase. It was thought that once the boycott was off the ground many more people would join in. The telephone company was not about to cut off thousands of phones, especially with all the bad publicity that would attend disconnecting an isolated senior citizen's one link to the outside.

Support for the boycott was obviously growing when the PSB had to rule on whether to allow the phone company to put the rate increase into effect under bond, or to reject the case. The PSB was thus caught between the boycott and the

phone company, and (illegally) refused to allow the temporary increase -- but did not dismiss the case. The result was an important lesson for the people of Vermont: laws were not sacred, imperial standards, but rather were instruments of the state which could and would be manipulated to satisfy temporary interests.

The State Supreme Court ruled that the PSB had to fish or cut bait, and threw the case back at them. The PSB then demanded that the phone company produce a cost-of-service analysis before it would decide the case. No such analysis had ever been produced before, and the company was not about to set a dangerous precedent for future rate cases. The company appealed the decision of the PSB to the Supreme Court of Vermont; the appeal was dismissed on a technicality, and for the time being the telephone company was beaten.

Liberty Union's leadership in the boycott struggle was clear and well publicized. It gained the party much additional support, and also served to demonstrate the political nature of laws. Further, the fight showed clearly the inaction of the traditional parties, and LU tried to point up that the same people who head the parties also head the telephone company.

A less successful but no less important struggle in which LU has been engaged is the strikes of the construction unions. Local 522 of the Laborer's Union -- and other unions, including the carpenters and the electricians -- have been on strike for the past 18 months against 8 area contractors. All the unions except the Laborer's have remained fairly quiet because of poor leadership and the greater chances for moonlighting. Many people in Local 522 are unskilled and have no other means of income. The contractors, led by Pizzagali Construction Co. (with a huge mansion in Burlington and offices in the Virgin Islands) want an open shop so they can hire non-union workers at \$2.00 per hour. The union wage during the 8 or 9 months each year when work is available, is approximately \$5.50 per hour. Thus the contractors are out to bust the unions, and have not even made a pretense of desiring negotiations.

The laborers have continued picketing all this time; their leadership is militant and responds to the rank and file. They have received help from no one, one of the conspicuous absences being Governor Salmon, who won his election with significant sums of labor money and support; he recently awarded a new \$2,000,000 contract to Pizzagali.

Liberty Union has provided support for the laborers through the media, in demonstrations,  
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and by applying pressure on the governor. The result was a fact-finding board whose recommendations were ignored by him, and LU has not yet been able to pose a serious threat to his re-election because he can move to the right knowing that there is nowhere else for the union to go. The rank and file are putting up a courageous fight, and it is painful for LU members to realize that they cannot be of more assistance. This is the first direct labor contact for LU, and it shows just how much work there is to be done; were LU stronger now, the governor would not have such a free hand.

LU is committed, however, to doing the needed work in the years ahead. More and more Vermonters will come to a radical approach to solving their state's problems, and LU candidates will be elected to office. The electoral process is certainly limited, but at least in Vermont it presents radicals with promising and important opportunities which must be followed up and exploited. It also brings home the fact that radicalism is far from the people, which will make the struggle a long and difficult one. Anyone who can help with advice, money, information, or anything at all, should write, for which LU will be grateful.

The Liberty Union  
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Essex Jct., VT 05452

Because of all the publicity given to the Farah strike, the company has been putting different labels on the trousers it makes with scab labor. To keep the boycott effective, supporters should not purchase any of the following labels:

Golden Scroll	Cliff Mark
Passport	Beau Mark
Su-Par	Kainrod
Daire	Classic 20's
Club 20	

#### POURING ON THE COAL (cont'd)

the Brookside strike loses, the striking workers will be unable to get a job in Harlan.

In addition to the mine workers and people of Harlan County, the strike is of crucial concern to the corporate giants, the new energy conglomerates. In the negotiations at Brookside, the Duke Power Company is seeking to break the

national UMWA contract by its insistence on a no-strike clause. If Duke wins, it will set a dangerous precedent for next year's national coal negotiations.

Duke Power advertises itself to its consumers in the Carolinas as "The friendly neighborhood power company that rescues kittens out of trees." But in Harlan County Duke Power is the slum landlord of company houses which lack indoor plumbing or running water. Duke Power made \$80 million in profits last year, but gave Buddy Parker 30 days to get out of his company shack when he became permanently disabled in the unsafe Brookside mine. Duke Power is seeking a 17% rate increase in the Carolinas, but in 197-73 cheated Harlan County out of \$84,000 in property taxes.

The Duke Power Company and its Eastover subsidiary are trying to break the Brookside strike through the courts, and by direct intimidation. They are trying to provoke violence as a pretext for having the National Guard called out "to protect the mine," which could effectively end the strike. In mid-November dynamite was thrown from a company building at the picket line. Several strikers have been shot at. Thus far these attempts to provoke violence have failed, and the strikers have adhered to the request of the International officers to remain nonviolent.

Morale at Brookside is high. The UMWA International is giving its full support to the strike. It has 2 of its top organizers in Harlan. Strike benefits are among the highest ever paid by any US labor union, and strikers have been given union hospital cards. The UMWA is spending \$25,000 a week to support the Brookside workers.

#### Coal Miners Legal Defense Fund

There is, however, one expense the union cannot legally cover. Court injunctions by Judge Hogg have made it impossible for the union to cover legal fees for the non-union strike supporters -- the women and disabled and retired miners who are risking their lives to support the strike. If the union gave direct support to these people they would then be considered direct agents of the union, and the union itself would then be subject to further charges of contempt, and also to charges of unfair labor practices. Therefore a Coal Miners Legal Defense Fund has been established, with the help of Pineville, Kentucky attorney Steve Cawood, to raise money for the legal expenses of the strike supporters.

The people of Harlan County are fighting a hard battle, and need all the help they can get. Anyone wanting more information about the strike, or who is willing to contribute to its victory, should contact either:

Abate & Cohen	or	Brookside Women's Club
17 Adams St.		Box 262
Lexington, MA 02173		Evarts, KY 40828