

## For President: Bill Smith, Beatnik

di Murray N. Rothbard

Surely the high point in the 1956 conventions was that glorious moment when the irrepressible Terry Carpenter of Nebraska proposed to nominate one Joe Smith for President, and grand old Joe Martin, in his usual role as bastion of the democratic process, told Carpenter to "take your Joe Smith and get out of here." No other incidents marred the smooth unity of the convention. Well, now I am proposing for President a man equally obscure, but who actually exists and is running for the post: William Lloyd Smith of Chicago.

Bill Smith is a bookstore owner, duly nominated in solemn conclave by the national convention of the Beat Party of America, held in the beatnik Greenwich Village nightclub, the College of Complexes. To forestall any misunderstanding, I wish to state at once that I am unalterably and 100% opposed to the overall Beatnik philosophy. I am a champion of almost all the bourgeois values against which the Beatniks are rebelling. But politics, as we all know, makes strange bedfellows, and it is the *political* philosophy to the Beats that now deserves our attention.

First we must note that Bill Smith is the leader of the *responsible* beatniks. The Irresponsible, or outnik, faction, apparently headed by one Joffre Stewart of Chicago, fought the very idea of nominating a candidate (like, only *square* parties really nominate someone), or of insisting on binding the nominee to the adopted platform ("only finks play to win, anyhow.") But I am happy to point out that, after a bitter floor fight, the responsables won out, and Bill Smith will campaign on the platform.

Why should we squares vote for Bill Smith? Well, in the first place, this was perhaps the only convention this year that *wasn't* rigged. The voting went to *four* ballots, something unheard of since the Television Age decreed that no one have to stay up too late to watch the balloting. Seven men were originally placed in nomination; three of them were Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Senator Eastland, and Senator Kennedy, presumably without their express consent. Hurried conferences with the parliamentarian came up with the ruling that only people attending the convention were eligible, which ruled out the august Congressmen. Ballotting was then confined to Smith, Big Brown of Washington Square, Tom Condit, and the Golden Greek. The convention was nip-and-tuck, with Big Brown (the "big" refers to his height, 6'6") the local favorite son, in the lead. But after a long recess and much caucusing, Bill Smith, the golden-voiced orator who had delivered the keynote speech, was selected.

Joffre Stewart, by the way, was selected for Vice-President. The final ticket does lack geographical balance, it is true (both Smith and Stewart are from Chicago), but selecting Stewart was nonetheless a gesture as shrewdly and coolly political as Kennedy's pick of Johnson. For in picking Stewart, Smith, too was bringing much-needed unity to his party by selecting his bitterest opponent to run with him. Furthermore, the party is now fully integrated, since Stewart is a Negro. It is to be hoped that the irreconcilable extremists on both sides of the fence will face the facts and close ranks.

What are Bill Smith's qualifications? Well, not the least is that Bill, too, is a symbol of 1960's New Men of Youth. Yes, Bill is a representative of the post-war generation that is now staking its claim to political power. In fact, Bill is 36, which is *younger* and therefore more representative and more symbolic than even Jack Kennedy. Bill is unmarried, not I take it for the usual squalid Bohemian reasons, but because "when you declare war on the values of society, it's a hell of a thing to drag a women into it." Well, what could be more forthright or heroic than that? Bill, like his Republican and Democratic opponents, is also a veteran of World War II. But Bill was not a PT-boat hero. Not

quite. In fact, Bill Smith rather proudly proclaimed that he was brought up five times on charges of court martial. I submit that this is a most welcome change – even a New Frontier. Not only does Bill Smith's war record touch a chord of American sentiment that has seldom been tapped by the major party candidates, but we can be sure that Smith is a firm anti-militarist, and will not lightly surrender the principle of civilian control of the armed forces.

But the real glory of the Beat Party is not so much that candidate as the platform. Let me hasten to say that the platform is, at times, vague and even inconsistent, but what platform isn't? There is no point in being *too* purist about all this; after all, every platform is a compromise of contending interests. One plank calls for "abolition of the working class," presumably a reference to the future glories of automation. Another calls for a \$10,000,000,000 subsidy to artists – apparently a sop to the socialist faction. A third was a little unclear in transmission, but it called for something like a "balanced debt" and a "repudiated budget," instead of the other way around. (So, all right, do you think *Galbraith's* economics any better?) But the true greatness of the Beat Party platform lies in its foreign policy plank, and its main political philosophy plank. Both are the most libertarian to be found in any party this year, if not any year. The foreign policy position is remarkably clear-cut and free of contradiction: absolute peace with all nations, because the "Beatniks are cowards."

The all-time purest libertarian plank, however, is the following: Bill Smith pledges that, when elected, his first act will be the immediate announcement of the *dissolution of the Federal government*. His second act will be his instant resignation. No one, not Barry Goldwater, not even J. Bracken Lee, will ever top that one.

And so – Mr. And Mrs. Conservative, if you want a *real* choice this year, if you are tired of the socialism of the Democrats and the me-tooism of the Republicans, and if you have given up hope of the third party that has been long promised and never fulfilled, awake and take heart! There *is* a real choice this year, there is a real third party in the field. Maybe it's not everything you hoped for, but in is by far the best you will have. So face the facts of political life, and vote for Bill Smith for President and Joffre Stewart for Vice-President. Don't waste your vote again!