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Dear Ed,

Considering how busy we both always seem to be, perhaps it's best that I outline some of what I have in mind in terms of an article from you on the Wisconsin Democratic political scene.

It seems obvious to me that the Democratic Party here, like the party nationally, is in a state of crisis and confusion--its moral compass thrown out of whack by the perceived exigencies of playing winning politics. I regard it as almost inevitable that Tommy Thompson will trounce Tom Loftus--not just because of the advantages of incumbency but because it will not be clear to people what, if anything, Tom Loftus stands for.

What I have in mind is a hard look at the Democratic Party of Wisconsin as it heads into this gubernatorial race. I am especially interested in the machinations of power beyond the scenes, something a player like yourself would have first-hand knowledge of. My suspicion is that the party, in some fundamental way, is being taken over by technocrats and political managers--that ideology is being concocted rather than borne out of personal or political conviction. I think we could identify ways in which the Dems, up to and including Loftus, have behaved gutlessly--cozying up to corporations, avoiding controversial issues, acing out progressives.

I want specifics, and I want a tough, hard-hitting analysis. Articles like this are relevant in direct proportion to how provocative they are. I think we should feel free to predict Loftus' defeat. I think we should ask whether--if not assert that--a third party is needed. I think we should bloody the noses of a few of these technocrats. Does this sound like an audacious enough task?

Your analysis, I expect, will be populist in orientation and will shake people up. It's fine to base most of what you have to say on your own experience, but I do think the narrative would benefit from pulling in as much outside information as you can--quotes from letters, policy papers, remembered conversations, etc. You may also want to powwow with

a few political observers whose judgment you respect, and pull in a quote or two.

In terms of length, we're talking 45-65 inches, or 2,000 to 3,500 words, or 8 to 14 doubled-spaced pages. Understand that things will probably be trimmed down somewhat in the editing process. You can be sure this piece will receive good editing and presentation, and that you will be compensated poorly enough to know you wrote it with some higher purpose in mind. (Our cover-story rate is \$2.50 per published column inch.) I would be willing to make a special mailing of the piece to every daily paper in the state, offering reprint rights. I'm thinking of March or April as the ideal time for this to run.

I hope this appeals to you and that you can find the time. I'd be happy to discuss it further, perhaps over lunch or coffee, and offer the paper's assistance in any ways it can (such as going through campaign-finance records). This could be the most important story we do all year.

Best,



Bill Lueders