

religiously defensible golden mean between theocracy and secularism.

On page after page, the signatories tip their hand by calling attention to the Neoconservative Book of Common Prayer, featuring Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address and King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail." Such allusions remind me of Mr. Dick in David Copperfield. A true obsessive, the perpetual houseguest of David's aunt could not end a conversation without babbling on about the execution of Charles I. In a similar but far less charming way, neocons cannot talk about anything (indeed, one wonders whether they can simply order a hot dog at a ballgame), without bringing up Lincoln, the American refounder, and M.L.K., the purifier of a once-racist nation. While Thomas Fleming insists that the King references are only a bumbling attempt to come up with a natural-law argument for a war that the signatories propose to defend, my own thoughts are darker. These references may be the homage paid to those whom the neocons can never put out of their heads, the same way Dickens' character obsessed about King Charles the Martyr.

Some who signed "What We're Fighting For: A Letter from America" may have had to swallow hard before affixing their shaky signatures. For those who would like to continue to believe in their general, if now compromised, intellectual honesty, it is possible to hope that this was the case, at least for a few.

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POLITICS

Conservative Balance-of-Power

by Greg Kaza

A remarkable yet unreported trend in U.S. politics over the past decade is the balance-of-power held by conservative political parties in federal elections, if we define balance-of-power as a vote total equal to or greater than the difference in

votes between the Democratic and Republican candidates in a race. Some media pundits noted that Green Party presidential candidate Ralph Nader held the balance-of-power in 2000, both in the overall popular vote and in eight states. Yet Reform Party candidate Patrick J. Buchanan also held it in five states (Florida, Iowa, New Mexico, Oregon, and Wisconsin) and came within two tenths of one percent of achieving it in the popular vote.

Since the Newt Gingrich-engineered Republican takeover of the U.S. House in 1994, conservatives have held balance-of-power in at least one race in which a Democrat was victorious in each election cycle. They stood for office as candidates of such third parties as the American Independent, Constitution, Patriot, Right-to-Life, and New York Conservative parties. The races in which they held balance-of-power, allowing Democrats to win, were in California (District 36), Oregon (1), and Pennsylvania (15) in 1994; Massachusetts (6) in 1996; Washington (8) in 1998; and Minnesota (6) in 2000. The Democrats who benefited, arguably, from GOP indifference to paleo-conservative issues were Jane Harman of California; Elizabeth Furse of Oregon; Paul McHale of Pennsylvania; John Tierney of Massachusetts; Jay Inslee of Washington; and Bill Luther of Minnesota. Only Representatives Furse and McHale no longer serve in Congress.

Conservative balance-of-power has more significance today in a closely divided House (221 Republicans, 212 Democrats, and two independents) than after the 1994 election, when Republicans outnumbered Democrats, 230 to 204 (with one independent). In addition to the six elections in which Democrats were victorious, Republicans won four other House races in which conservatives held balance-of-power. A mere shift of five seats would return the House to Democratic control.

The late Murray N. Rothbard termed balance-of-power "the spoiler tradition in American politics." The trend can be traced to the mid-1960's when the New York Conservative Party began fielding candidates to oppose moderate Republicans. Conservative Party cofounder Kieran O'Doherty failed against Republican Congressman John V. Lindsay, a Barry Goldwater critic, in New York's 17th District in 1964. But *National Review* founder William F. Buckley held balance-of-power as the conservative candi-

date in New York's 1965 mayoral race against the victorious Lindsay. The Conservative Party has held balance-of-power more than any other right-wing party, though the Libertarian Party, founded in 1971, has achieved it far more frequently (49 times), including in six U.S. Senate and 14 House races won by Democrats. The Conservative Party's greatest triumph was the election of Buckley's brother James to the U.S. Senate in 1970. New York Republican insiders still termed the Conservatives "spoilers." Indeed, Democrats won close House races featuring Conservatives in 1966 (District 27) and 1974 (2). Since the late 1970's, the Conservative Party has relied more on New York's unique cross-endorsement law that allows it, like the Right To Life Party, to endorse federal Republicans. Still, in New York's 19th District in 1996, Conservative Joseph J. Dio Guardi held balance-of-power against Republican Sue Kelly and Democrat Richard S. Klein.

Conservative candidates have held balance-of-power far more frequently since the mid-1960's than left-of-center parties like California's Peace & Freedom Party or the Naderite Greens. Yet the Socialist Party, circa 1900-1920, held it more often than any other 20th-century third other party. Statistician Charles Ferris Gettemy, following the 1904 election, shared his findings with President Theodore Roosevelt, a New York Republican. Mr. Roosevelt, in a February 1, 1905 reply that might be misinterpreted today, termed the Socialist vote a significant development. Mr. Roosevelt played the role of spoiler in 1912 when his third-party Bull Moose candidacy cost Republican President William Howard Taft the election.

During the 20th century, Socialist candidates held balance-of-power in 221 elections, including 120 races lost by Democrats. Democratic presidents Woodrow Wilson (1913-19) and Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1933-45) co-opted key planks from the Socialist platform (child-labor laws, income and inheritance taxes, unemployment insurance, Social Security) after the Socialist balance-of-power grew. Wilson's papers reveal that he met a Socialist delegation in January 1916. Likewise, FDR met perennial Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas many times at the White House. In 1928, FDR had been narrowly elected New York governor (49 percent), defeating Republican Albert Ottinger (48.4 percent). Socialist Louis

Memo to Worship Leaders: Shut Up

by Jeremy Lott

Waldman held balance-of-power that year (2.7 percent). FDR joked afterward that he was “the one-half-of-one-percent governor.” An astute political entrepreneur, FDR had good reason to co-opt Socialist planks. As David A. Shannon writes, “The story of the decline of the Socialist Party since 1933 is, for the most part, the story of the political success of the New Deal.”

It is difficult to imagine a Republican president conferring with such Reform Party candidates as populist H. Ross Perot or conservative Pat Buchanan or a Republican House leadership or Senate minority co-opting their issues. The Reform Party has held balance-of-power in only a half-dozen federal elections, including Kentucky’s 1998 U.S. Senate contest. Beltway strategists have argued that the Green Party is a greater threat to Democrats than right-wing third parties are to Republicans. Yet the Greens have not held balance-of-power in a single Senate race.

Beltway strategists are less credible when confronting Libertarian balance-of-power. Since 1994, the Libertarian Party has held balance-of-power in three Senate elections won by Democrats: California in 1994 (Barbara Feinstein); Nevada in 1998 (Harry Reid); and Washington in 2000 (Maria Cantwell). Libertarian balance-of-power, especially in the American West, grew in the 1990’s, as the party fielded more candidates. The same statistical trend is apparent in the history of the Socialist and Progressive parties in the early 20th century. Republicans, who lost the Senate to Democrats in 2001 and enter the 2002 election with a two-seat (51-49) deficit, should find this trend of some interest and co-opt a plank or two.

That, however, is unlikely to happen. Consider the treatment of Dr. Ron Paul, a cultural, pro-life conservative and the Libertarian Party’s 1988 presidential candidate. Dr. Paul, a former U.S. Air Force flight surgeon, was one of only three conservatives serving in the House in 1976 who endorsed Ronald Reagan against moderate Republican incumbent Gerald R. Ford. He re-entered the House in 1997, representing Texas’ 14th District as a Republican. Since his return, Dr. Paul has introduced 124 bills in the House, and not one has passed the Republican-controlled chamber.

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It is often said that former Princeton president Jonathan Edwards, the man credited with setting fire to the tinderbox that became the First Great Awakening, was a fiery preacher. His message was certainly incendiary, but by modern standards he was nothing of the sort.

According to minister Victor Shepherd, Edwards may have “thundered like a cataract into which there poured the streams of fathomless spirituality,” but he did so quietly and in a monotone voice. Edwards’ most famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God,” was read by the New England divine “word-for-word, hunched over the lectern, rarely lifting his head to look at the congregation.” Martyn Lloyd Jones rightly judged that “no man was further removed from the violence of a ranting traveling evangelist than Jonathan Edwards.”

If I read him correctly, there was a theological method to Edwards’ madness. He believed he was expounding God’s very Word, which needed no enthusiasm on his part in order to accomplish its purpose. Such distractions might even work at cross-purposes with what the Holy Spirit was trying to accomplish.

In this post-theological era, the one issue that can turn the most harmonious American church into a chest-thumping, hair-pulling, mud-wrestling wreck is worship. Whether or not to use an electric guitar seems, to me, a trifling matter. But let someone bring an ax on stage in any middle-aged congregation, and then set back and watch the generational fallout. Seniors are often pitted against (relative) youth in a nasty fight that they know they will eventually lose through attrition. The younger group, for its part, has to choose between compromise and evolution or outright rebellion and schism. My preferences are (slightly) more modern, but, while that older order may have been too formulaic, it at least avoided giving the “worship leader” the prominence that he (or, often, she) enjoys today.

Readers from a more liturgical setting

might wish to know what a “worship leader” is. He is not analogous to the choir director, the organist, or even the music director of yesteryear. Rather, worship leaders today occupy a new, more expansive role in the life of the Church. To state simply that the worship leader is responsible for picking the music, lining up musicians and singers, and leading worship is a little bit like saying that Beethoven wrote some music or that cheerleaders make a valuable contribution to team spirit. Worship leaders don’t merely sing; they emote. They determine when the congregation should rise and fall, and they try their very best to attune themselves to any stirrings of the Spirit. And they talk—oh, how they talk.

In the many, many cases that I’ve observed, nearly unanimously, the worship leader talks entirely too much. However much he may have rehearsed, his performance comes off as spontaneous and unscripted—and, therefore, rambling. Often, what he has to say amounts to a free-form sermon: *Live for God! Make a decision! Commit your life to Him! You, too, can change your life! Jesus loves you! No, really, He does! Exclaim! the good news of Jesus Christ!*

To doubt these people’s motives would be to do them a disservice. Still, at some point, it becomes wrong not to say that there is a person employed by the church to preach the actual sermon called a “pastor,” and he is probably better equipped than the worship leader to bring the Word of God to the congregation.

I am not calling for a return to the staid formalism that Florence King describes in stories of her High Church childhood. The congregation was not to sing too-vigorous hymns, she says, because, “after all, someone might get carried away and fall into religious ecstasy, and you mustn’t do that sort of thing in church.” But it seems to me that the Spirit can be drowned out as easily as He can be ignored. Put another way, everybody remembers Edwards’ famous sermon, but nobody remembers what hymns they sang that Sunday.

To worship leaders, I say: Please, I beg you, don’t talk. Just sing.

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