

What Has Happened to Republicans?

(First published 2/6/2008)

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Today is Ronald Reagan's birthday. I believe he would be taken aback if he were alive to witness what is taking place within the Republican party today. Assuming Senator John McCain wins the GOP nomination, it will show how the party has been ideologically transformed since President Reagan so adroitly communicated the conservative core values which defined the Republican party in the 1980's. Reagan united all Americans with his charisma and his ability to communicate the necessity of fiscal conservatism, strong national defense, and strong social values for the betterment of the country. He was an optimist who believed in the strength of the American people and united his GOP base along with "Reagan Democrats" to win landslide elections in 1980 and 1984. The catchphrase of this election seems to be "change," communicated as often by Republicans as Democrat candidates. According to Democrats, everything is bad, everything is going wrong, and massive changes must be made to "save" the country. Democrat candidate Hillary Clinton promises huge, expensive government welfare programs if elected. Barack Obama, the Democrat senator with the most liberal voting record - more liberal than Clinton or Ted Kennedy - would also favor huge government intervention into the lives of all Americans yet gives no details on any of his policy recommendations for "change". He compares himself to former president John Kennedy, yet his identity seems to be based solely on rhetoric rather than substance. Is the country ready for 21st-century-style socialism? Or is there an alternative which will inspire Americans as Ronald Reagan's policies once did?

It is surprising that a candidate has emerged as the frontrunner in the race for the GOP nomination despite the fact that he is opposed by a majority of his party and has taken many positions in the past which are contradictory to the views of fiscal conservatives, economic conservatives, and social conservatives. John McCain's views on illegal aliens, Bush's tax cuts, oil exploration in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, climate change regulation, drug re-importation from Canada, and campaign-finance legislation have infuriated most conservatives, yet he has emerged, nevertheless, as the candidate who will most likely carry the banner for the Republican party in this year's presidential election. How can this be?

The GOP seems to have lost its way during the current primary season. Republicans seem to have lost the optimism of Ronald Reagan and echo the Democrats in their belief that the policies of the country must be drastically altered. Possible conservative candidates such as George Allen, Fred Thompson, and Duncan Hunter either never got started or never picked up support from conservatives. Another candidate, Mitt Romney, is distrusted because of his recent conversion to many conservative beliefs and another former Arkansas governor and Christian minister, Mike Huckabee, is a bit too slick for his own good and has too many social liberal policies which he implemented while in office. Thus, McCain has emerged as the probable GOP candidate despite his crabby, over-the-hill, liberal persona and the fact that he has been able to garner barely one-third of the Republican vote in the primaries.

Many conservatives worry that McCain might permanently change the "soul" of the Republican party and cause it to abandon its traditional conservative values. Is there much of a difference between John McCain and the Democrat candidates for president? One has to wonder when McCain declares that he is well-suited to reach across the aisle to work with Democrats. He has repeatedly demonstrated this with his record for tag-team legislation, working with Russ Feingold, Ted Kennedy, John Edwards, John Kerry, and other liberal lawmakers. "Reaching across the political aisle" always entails selling out conservative values. McCain, himself, seems not to understand the difference between Republicans and Democrats and makes dumb, self-defeating statements such as, "I have no doubt that Senator Clinton would make a good president." That sounds a lot like an endorsement to me. The so-called "mainstream media" is rooting for McCain right now because, if he is nominated, liberals will be in a win, win, win position. If Clinton wins the presidency, good for liberals. If Obama wins, that's good, too. McCain, ditto. Of course, once McCain gets the Republican nomination all the knives will come out and he will be brutally attacked by most of today's media "supporters".

So, what does all this augur for the GOP? I see little chance that Republicans will defeat Democrats in November. The country will fall under the control of big-government politicians controlling the executive branch and both houses of congress. The Supreme Court will probably see two or three more liberal judges appointed to the court. How many years will this last? Only history will tell. But until another conservative standard bearer comes along, the Republican party will most probably be stranded in the political wilderness. Then, again, events in history can change everything. Did not the defeat of Barry Goldwater set the stage for the election of Ronald Reagan?

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