

THE WEYRICH INSIDER



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Dear Friend:

I am going to venture out and say something. I know I am going to get into trouble for saying this. You may not like the message. I hope you don't kill the proverbial messenger.

To what I am about to say I have given a lot of thought. As with many things I say, I could be dead wrong. But as an observer of the political scene over these many decades, I think I owe it to you to tell you what I believe I see coming.

I think we are on the verge of seeing the development of a new major political party. Now, please understand, I didn't say I was advocating a new political party. I just think a major new party is awaiting formation and none of us may be able to do anything about it, even if we want to.

The signs are everywhere. First, the Democratic party could be imploding. The recent party switches are likely to be followed by others, especially in the South. One knowledgeable observer likened the current Democratic party to the Soviet Union, just before its disintegration, in 1990. The signs of implosion were everywhere but those of us saying it were not believed, just as I do not expect many will believe me when I make this forecast.

Pennsylvania Governor Bob Casey came close to running against President Bill Clinton in the Democratic primaries. Casey would not have defeated him, but he may have weakened him even further and ended up disconnecting values oriented voters permanently from the Democratic party.

While the Republicans are getting reasonably high marks for their work thus far on the "Contract with America", and Speaker Gingrich should be lauded for a remarkable performance, one number keeps cropping up in every poll where the question is asked. I have seen polls by Republicans, Democrats, the media and business interests. Every single poll indicates that between 50 and 60% of Americans want a new political party.

Not all of these people agree with each other, so that if and when a new party emerged, some of that number would be lost. Still, those are awesome figures. And Ross Perot continues to register the same 20% of the vote he got in 1992 no matter who the other candidates are. This vote is unshakable. I would contend that this vote is not just for Perot, the person. It is for a different approach to politics which he personifies.

Moreover, a majority of those registering to vote are now registering as independents or as members of third parties, except in the South where the Republicans are picking up the majority of new registrants.

As I commented before, the national leadership of the Republicans is focused on economic issues (albeit important issues) and again wants to duck cultural questions, most especially those dealing with abortion and homosexuality.

All of this just jumps out and says in big red letters, "NEW PARTY!"

What isn't clear is whether such a party will develop before or after 1996.

It is still possible that Republicans will paper over their differences enough to avoid a major schism before the next Presidential election. It will take skilled leadership to accomplish this with Bob Dornan and Alan Keyes stirring up the values questions and Pat Buchanan raising the flag of economic nationalism in addition to social issues.

Yet Republicans may want to win badly enough that they will do what is necessary to win. They did so in 1994 and won despite themselves and despite efforts of some of their leaders to give issues to the other side (such as crime, for example).

However, they may not paper over their differences. An Arlen Specter could well walk if he doesn't get some compromise on the abortion issue. Likewise, Bob Dornan has promised friends privately that there will be big trouble if any of the W's are on the ticket (Whitman, Weld or Wilson).

If the Republicans manage to make do for the election, how they will manage once they have control of the White House and both houses of Congress is another matter. It is likely that whomever won the White House would soon cool the revolutionary fervor which has driven House Republicans. Congressional Republicans only tend to do well when there is a Democrat in the White House. When there is a Republican President, Congressional Republicans become subservient to the President. Moreover, the sort of Republican who would be likely to play ball with the House revolutionaries as well as their Senate counterparts, is not likely to be nominated or elected.

It could be that the voters will give the Republicans one last chance and then, if they find nothing much has changed, the move toward a new party will really begin.

It has been a long time since anything other than the Republicans or the Democrats have been the major players. True, there have been a number of major party movements in this Century: the Bull Moose Progressives under Teddy Roosevelt in 1912, the Progressives under Bob LaFollette in 1924, the American Independent movement under George Wallace in 1968 and Perot in 1992. In each case one of the major parties moved to incorporate that vote into its coalition, thus saving the two party structure.

This time, however, the Perot vote, although it went for the Republicans overwhelmingly in 1994, has re-emerged as an independent block on the national scene. The values component of the

GOP (which represents over 40% of those who voted for Republican candidates in 1992, and a quarter of all voters nationally) is very disillusioned and ready, even eager, to walk.

The problem for advocates of a new party is that they don't have any leaders. Gen. Colin Powell has hinted that he might like to lead a new party. Yet no one knows where he stands on any issues.

It could be that some one like a Gov. Casey could become the leader of the new party. Although Buchanan denies any interest in a new party, should he do unexpectedly well in Republicans circles, the combination of the two of them is not out of the question. Black activist Alan Keyes would probably be more open to that suggestion than would Buchanan.

It could happen that the Democratic party would, in fact, disintegrate and that what would be left would be the Republicans and a new party. The reverse could also be true, but is less likely.

What is likely to happen, whether before or after the next election, is the formation of a new party bringing elements together from both of the major parties. The Cold War kept people together in the same coalition who wouldn't have otherwise been there. The post cold war configuration, and the re-emergence of an America first sort of politics, is bound to challenge the internationalist consensus that has dominated both parties since the end of the Second World War.

As the culture continues to disintegrate, values questions will become increasingly important. Ben Wattenberg has pointed out that cultural questions were barely a blip on the radar screen in 1980, but now they dominate every poll taken. The fact that the leadership of both parties largely ignores this reality, is giving impetus to the idea of a new party.

It should be noted that it isn't easy to organize a competitive party. There are lots of small parties on both ends of the political spectrum but the major parties in recent years have passed all sorts of measures which give themselves, their conventions and their candidate special privileges and subsidies. These are measures which do not apply to new parties.

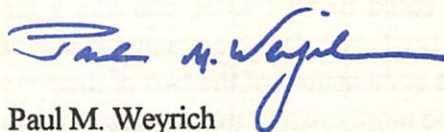
Still what Perot was able to put together, even after he dropped out of the race and then re-entered in the Fall, shows that the sentiment exists for an independent course.

At some point, some figure, perhaps a Governor, perhaps one of the new Congressmen or Senators, is going to see the handwriting on the wall and roll the dice. If such a figure is credible enough (and by the way, that figure could be out of the business or sports world and not just out of organized politics -- who knows maybe Bill Gates will invent the Microsoft party) the process will begin. When the Republicans came together in 1854 it took six years before they ran a winning race for President. With the electronic media dominance of our time, the time would probably be much shorter.

Let me repeat again in case what I wrote earlier didn't sink in. I am not advocating this course. I am not saying a new party would save the country. I am saying it is almost certain to happen. That being the case, some thoughtful people are going to conclude that they may as well lead it rather than just be a follower.

As events unfold in the 1996 race for the Presidency, you may want to keep the new party idea in mind as a backdrop to future happenings. I truly believe it is coming and coming faster than any us believe could happen.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul M. Weyrich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Paul M. Weyrich