

Will the treason faction wreck the Republican Party?

by Jeffrey Steinberg

On April 9, Albert R. Hunt wrote one of the more insightful of the many recent political obituaries for the Republican Party, on the opinion page of the *Wall Street Journal*. Hunt observed, "More than at any time since taking control of Congress in 1994, the GOP is wracked by internal schisms, on the defensive and devoid of any unifying agenda or leader. The Republican disarray is most in evidence in the epicenter of its self-styled revolution, the House of Representatives." After cataloguing a recent string of policy blunders by the Republican leadership in the House, Hunt noted, "The upshot: For the first time this century, it's conceivable that the party holding the White House will gain House seats in the sixth year of its executive reign. Democrats need a pickup of fewer than a dozen seats to win control."

Beyond the prospects of a Republican mid-term loss of the House majority, there are other, even more ominous signs of a far-reaching GOP splintering. On March 25, Ellen Craswell, who was the Republican Party's 1996 candidate for Governor of Washington (she lost to Democrat Gary Locke), led a rally of 300 supporters on the steps of the State Capitol, where she announced that she was quitting the Republican Party, to head up the state branch of Howard Phillips's U.S. Taxpayers Party. A leading "social conservative," Craswell described the American Heritage Party, which is the name of the Washington affiliate of the Phillips group, as the "party of God," and proclaimed that the banner of the GOP splinter group will be "life, liberty, and property," an unfortunate choice of words, straight out of the preamble to the Confederate States of America's constitution. (In the Middle East, of course, the term "party of God," or "Hezbollah," is associated with car bombings and other acts of terrorism.)

In a recent special election in California, Democrat Lois Capp defeated a Republican candidate who had won the ballot spot by defeating the favored candidate of the state Republican Party leadership. Tom Bordonaro had won the GOP primary, on the basis of heavy out-of-state support from Gary Bauer, Jerry Falwell, James Dobson, and other leading figures on the "Christian Right." Bordonaro focussed much of his campaign on the single-issue of late-term abortion. His near-landslide defeat by Capp was seen by some political observers, as a sign that the era of single-issue politics is coming to an end.

After his defeat, a number of Republican Party moderates told the *Wall Street Journal* that they feared that Bauer and company were running a "jihad" inside the GOP, which threatened to split the party down the middle.

A few days after the California events, a slate of far-right "social conservatives" swept the Republican Party nominations for U.S. Senate and several key state posts in Illinois, prompting forecasts of a Democratic Party sweep in November. The victorious Illinois slate was also backed by the Bauer-Falwell-Robertson apparatus, and the results of those primaries also prompted howls from moderate Republicans.

James Dobson, who heads up the Colorado-based Focus on the Family, and has a radio show that reaches millions of social conservatives each week, has threatened to bolt from the Republican Party if his agenda is not embraced by the Gingrich-Lott Congressional leadership. In March, Dobson had a heated exchange with Republican Congressional leaders; he followed up his face-to-face confrontation with a March 24 letter to a select group of Republican lawmakers, containing further threats of a public break with the GOP. The next day, Craswell announced her departure from the GOP.

Fault lines on Clintongate

While it is no secret that the vast majority of Republicans would view the demise of the Clinton Presidency as a windfall for the party, there are also important fault lines emerging on this front. The Falwell-Robertson crowd is in an insurrectionary alliance with British and Israeli Likud foreign agencies, to destroy the institution of the Presidency. Independent Counsel Kenneth Starr, as *EIR* has documented, is an asset of this effort, as is British intelligence-linked money-bags Richard Mellon Scaife. A growing majority of Americans are increasingly accepting the notion, publicly aired by First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, that there is a "vast right-wing conspiracy" out to destroy the Clinton Presidency at all costs.

A quiet resistance to this insurrection is growing among Republican Party ranks. Congressional Republican "pragmatists," including Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) and even some people around Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.), fear that the backlash triggered by the attacks against President Clinton, will wipe out the Republican majority in the House and severely damage the GOP's prospects for capturing the White House in 2000. Other senior Republican moderates see the assault on the Presidency as a broader threat to the U.S. Constitution (although hardly anyone is willing to incur the party leadership's wrath by saying so in public), and some even see the weakening of the Presidency as a danger, in light of the global financial and monetary breakdown crisis, which demands Executive branch action.

On March 8, in a television interview, Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) voiced his concern over the consequences of an impeachment brawl in Congress: "I don't think there ought to be an impeachment proceeding brought unless there is an open-and-shut case. America cannot stand the trauma of an impeachment matter unless it is cut and dried. And I have always felt that if it was cut and dried, that President Clinton would resign. But when you consider tying up the House of Representatives with articles of impeachment, and the entire Senate has to sit, and many people don't focus on the fact that the Chief Justice presides, there goes the Supreme Court. Our government is tied in a knot."

In stark contrast to Specter's warnings, two leading Congressional Jacobins, House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Tex.) and House Majority Leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.), have issued vile personal attacks against President Clinton, in a transparent effort to curry favor with the Dobson-Falwell-Robertson apparatus. The Clintongate issue is certain to intensify the fissuring of the GOP.

A break with Reaganism and Thatcherism

Not all of the fissuring of the Republican Party is centered around treachery and ideological foolishness. As the global financial crisis deepens, and occupies more and more attention among policymakers, there are signs of some Republicans breaking from the past 30 years' paradigm of free trade and post-industrial policies.

In a commentary in the March 25 *New York Post*, syndicated columnist and possible GOP Presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan made a public break with Reaganomics and Thatcherism. He posed the question: "Did Success Ruin the Right?" The column cited a recently published book by British author John Gray, a former Thatcherite, entitled *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism*. Buchanan argued that the "common deep tax cuts, the slashing of safety nets and welfare benefits, and global free trade," associated with the economic policies of former President Ronald Reagan and former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, had devastated the very conservative working class families that had made up the backbone of the "Reagan Democrat" voters who swept Reagan into the White House in 1980.

"Reaganism and its twin sister, Thatcherism, create fortunes among the highly educated, but in the middle and working classes, they generate anxiety, insecurity and disparities in income. Since these classes seek stability, security and order from their political systems, above all else, Thatcherism and Reaganism thus undermine the very social structure on which they were built," Buchanan wrote.

Buchanan, echoing ideas that have been associated with Lyndon LaRouche for decades, observed that, with unbridled free market capitalism, "factories and businesses open and close with startling speed, in that 'creative destruction' so beloved of think-tank scholars. As companies merge, downsize and disappear, the labor forces must always be ready to pick up and move on. . . . The cost is paid in social upheaval and family breakdown, as even women with toddlers enter the labor force to keep up the family's standard of living. Deserted factories mean gutted neighborhoods, ghost towns, ravaged communities and regions that go from boom to bust to boom again, like the Rust Belt."

Buchanan said, "Unbridled capitalism is an awesome destructive force. It makes men and women obsolete as rapidly as it does the products they produce and the plants that employ them. And the people made obsolete and insecure are workers, employees, 'Reagan Democrats,' rooted people, conservative people who want to live their lives and raise their families in the same neighborhoods they grew up in. Unbridled capitalism tells them they cannot."

"Conservatism," Buchanan warned, "is thus at a crossroads. If social conservatism is at war with unfettered capitalism, whose side are we on? A reluctance to choose lies behind the conservative crackup."

What remains to be seen, in the run-up to the November 1998 mid-term elections, is whether the Democratic Party is up to the task of capitalizing on the Republican fissuring. If the traditional, mainstream Democrats are unable to establish the means of reconstituting an alliance with traditional Republicans, the country may be headed for a crisis of political institutions, unparalleled since the 1856-60 period of political realignment that produced the original Republican Party of Abraham Lincoln.