

Editorial

America's Three-Ring Circus

One of the bigger misunderstandings about the American electorate is that it is divided into two parties, Democrats and Republicans, and that neither of these parties provides enough choice for voters. This isn't accurate.

The American electorate is not really two parties, but three, and they divide as follows.

Party one is the country's business party. It is the country's conservative party. This party trusts in business and microeconomics. A government that allows markets to function is believed to be the most reliable government. This is the party in America that represents the country's true business class. This is the party that creates the nation's wealth. It is the party of Main Street. Its heroes are Robert Taft and Barry Goldwater. And Ronald Reagan is the president that best represents this class. Because this party believes so much in the benefits of markets, it is not particularly strong in foreign affairs. According to the market party, wars are wasteful, they destroy the predictability of markets. Their patience for foreign interventions can be limited.

America's second political party is the one that runs the country's institutions. This party is home to the Banks, Insurance Companies, the Pentagon, the Media, Big Business, and just about every other institution that relies on or works with federal government. These people are not initial wealth creators, which may be why it was said of Margaret Thatcher that she never met a big institution she didn't want to hit with her handbag. That woman believed in markets. But, for better or for worse, members of the institution party are the ones that make the country work—they run our nation's engines. They conduct our wars. Often they have a hard time distinguishing between a big government Republican (Bush) and a fiscally conservative Democrat (Clinton). Both fit easily within the party's framework.

However, calling George W. Bush a big government Republican isn't exactly fair to the President, because it is impossible to run a smaller central government in times of war. What is intriguing about Bush's opportunities in his second term, assuming America wins the War on Terror, is a chance for him to govern in his second term as a member of the country's first party, the "market" party. The only other American President faced with War in his first term and the Home Front in his second term was Lincoln, who never got that chance.

The third American political party is the Hard Left. After the bitter way this party conducted itself both during and after the presidential campaign, identifying who they are isn't necessary (see Michael Moore). Because America is basically a conservative country, the only time that a representative of this party could be elected president would be during a time of economic national emergency—such as the Great Depression. In other times, a leader of the Hard (Angry) Left would be dismissed by voters. Think Howard Dean or Hillary Clinton.

Politics is fluid of course. And it is the good politicians that are able to reach across the divisions of the three parties and unite to become representatives for two out of three elements. In the '80s Reagan represented *markets* in his first term and helped fix the American economy. In his second term, he led American *institutions* to victory over the Soviets in the Cold War. Franklin Roosevelt governed as a member of the *Hard Left* in his first two terms. In his third term, he led our *institutions* successfully in World War II. Lesser politicians belong to only one party.

The most interesting movement that came out of this year's presidential election is that the irrational behavior of certain members of the big "institution" party took them to the brink of falling in with the Hard Left. The explosion of alternative news, (radio, cable) outed the political agendas of several major newspapers and television networks—think *New York Times*, *Oregonian* and CBS News—casting them, accurately, in a new light, as part of the "angry" Hard Left. And that meant loss of credibility. And that is not bad.