

My Christmas Wish

An End to America's Political Disease - Bipolarism

This is the time of year when everyone is making wishes. My wish is the formation of a strong, enduring, third political party before the beginning of the 2012 presidential election.

Why would an American who has spent half of his adult life living overseas make such an unusual Christmas wish? The answer is simple. The American system of government is broken, and much of the world depends on it.

This said, broken comes in many forms ranging all the way from a minor malfunction that can easily be fixed to major systemic dysfunction that requires a thorough overall or even replacement. As a peace-loving reformer, who understands and appreciates the need for revolution, I am not advocating a complete overall of the American political system. Rather, I am encouraging important change that would revitalize interest in the American political process and turn what has become a vacuous ideological tug-of-war into a serious political debate that has national reform as the focus of our attention.

Indeed, it is already clear to a large number of people who pay very close attention to what goes on in Washington that the American government listens to the American people, not so much for the purpose of knowing better how to serve them, but rather how to manipulate them into believing that they are being served.

Politics in America today has become much like a Sunday afternoon football match. When the game begins most everyone has already chosen a side. Those who have not watch and wait until a victor becomes imminent, and then cast their ballot so as to be on the winning side. The job of the players on the field -- namely, our politicians -- is to generate as much excitement as possible. This, of course, is to make the game appear interesting, important, and memorable and to legitimize its outcome. Unfortunately, the true winner in this national tug-of-war is rarely the American people; rather it is those who collect the receipts at the box office.

Let us be clear. Ideology does not a nation make, but ownership, management, and utilization of a nation's assets do.

On the right, we have those who champion the American corporation and its ability to compete overseas. On the left, we have those who stand behind the American worker who must endure the vicissitudes of the economic business cycle never knowing whether tomorrow's business climate will force him to foreclose or allow him to purchase what he really cannot afford anyway. No matter the side for which you cheer, and hopefully it is for both, the outcome is pretty much the same, because those who control the fate of our nation are sitting in the box seats far removed from the playing field where our politicians actively encourage us to believe that something is actually getting done on our behalf.

In effect, the issues that matter are either never debated, or are only debated in such a way that the players move to the left or right, or up and down, the playing field depending on one's bipolar political perspective. Nearly all important decisions about the direction in which our nation is headed are decided in private meetings between the players and those who fund their campaigns. These decisions are not reached on the playing field that constitutes our national elections.

Now, you may argue, "So, what's new? Isn't this the way that it has always been?" Well, yes. Nevertheless, something very important has changed -- the degree of both domestic and foreign interdependence to which we are all subject.

When our nation first started, one staked his claim on land that belonged to a "heathen other", wrestled it from him, and developed it as one saw fit. Most everything a household needed was produced at home, and only certain vital investment items, such as an axe or seed, occasional niceties, and a musket were purchased at the general store. Today, nearly everything we do depends on the market in some direct or indirect way, and those who control the market determine our fate -- you know, the wealthy two

percent of all Americans who pay more than 50 percent of all federal tax revenue, those whom we might call the majority stake-holders in our nation's body politic. In short, where before, thinking that we had a voice, while never really having one, did not make a whole lot of difference. Today, it does. What is worse, our voice is now being used against us.

Well, my wish is not a panacea, for such does not exist in a democratic society, but it would be an important step in the right direction. A third party would break the bipolar, ideological deadlock that reduces each and every social, economic, and security issue into a media stunt that sheds light on, and raises the profile of, the chosen favorites of our unelected, self-appointed, behind-the-scenes heads of state. Indeed, a third party would inhibit the rapid escalation of important issues into ideological shouting matches that have little or no relevance to national well-being.

The American electorate has learned to vote with its feet, not because it is incapable of making wise decisions, rather because it is rarely given the opportunity to understand them very thoroughly. If you can name one issue of national importance that has not been trumped by ideological bickering in recent years, then it will be of small importance affecting very few people.

How my 2010 Christmas wish is to be realized is hardly a *fait accompli*. Certain is that it will take much more than this humble effort to achieve. Hopefully my New Year's resolution will be able to shed more light on the matter.