



The Liberty Pledge

AUGUST 1984

NEWSLETTER

DAVID BERGLAND WILL BE ON NATIONAL TV 26 SEPTEMBER/PBS/LATE NIGHT AMERICA/WEDNESDAY. This is a live call-in talk show at 10:30pm CST.

BALLOT ACCESS UPDATE: Petitioning is over, and the Presidential ticket is certified in 36 states plus DC, waiting for certification in 2 states plus Guam, seeking legal relief in 7 more states. We will be on the ballot in many more states than any other third party or independent candidate.

CLIPPINGS ARE COMING IN AT THE RATE OF OVER 100 PER WEEK. Around one-third are about Bergland/Lewis, and the rest are about local candidates. Even more clippings never come to our attention.

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13 Aug 1984

Iconoclasm Dept.

A new political slogan is offered by Richard Siano, a New Jersey member of the Libertarian Party:

"Ask not what you can do for your country. Just go out and do whatever the hell you can do for yourself."

Percy halted potshots at the right

Houston Post 17 Sept 1984

CHICAGO — Whether Sen. Charles H. Percy — for two decades the Midwest exemplar of liberal Republicanism — can convince Illinois conservatives that he is a born-again Reaganite will decide his survival in his fourth and toughest campaign for the Senate.

Early reluctance to move rightward has vanished. He spares no adjective in lavishing praise on Ronald Reagan, whose 1976 presidential candidacy was greeted by Percy as "the beginning of the end for our party." He sounds as anti-tax as Jack Kemp, as anti-communist as Jesse Helms. He fires an unrelieved barrage on liberal positions of his opponent, Rep. Paul Simon.

Nothing could testify more clearly to the polarization of American politics and the death of liberal Republicanism. Chuck Percy, who emerged nationally a generation ago as Nelson Rockefeller's cohort, at age 65 has ended hostilities with the Republican Right.

But the Right is not yet reciprocating. "We just do not consider Chuck trustworthy," a prominent Illinois conservative told us. He and his associates believe that Percy, once elected to possibly his last six-year term, will revert to liberal form. Such conservatives talk of throwing votes to the Libertarian Party nominee if Republican control of the Senate seems assured as the election nears (with Sen. Helms succeeding Percy as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee).

What makes even fragmentary defections dangerous is Percy's loss of his old base. Jewish support left him long ago because of his courageous, evenhanded Mideast posture. Blacks and labor leaders have abandoned Percy, facing his first liberal Democratic challenger.

Moreover, 20 years in elective politics have not softened Percy's image as the quintessential North Shore millionaire. If Percy is a difficult man to love, Paul Simon is one of the state's most likable political figures. A southern Illinoisan, he threatens the normal Republican downstate vote.

Accompanying Percy last week on a campaign swing into northwestern Illinois, we encountered less enthusiasm than complaints about his Senate office's constitu-



Rowland Evans



Robert Novak

ency service. Applause as he marched in Monmouth's annual parade was meager. A few days earlier, Libertarian candidate Steve Givot had been cheered while marching in the conservative Chicago suburb of Schaumburg.

Percy's response is to gra-tightly onto President Reagan's coattails, personal and ideological. At a fund-raiser at the Monmouth Country Club, he opposed tax increases because "the best way to get new revenue is the ec-

LITTLE ROCK, ARK.
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT
JUN 30 1984
M - 67,628
S - 126,917

Yet, the Libertarian stand for the freedom and dignity of the individual is a welcome one. It fills a need that the American Civil Liberties Union should address but doesn't. A vote for the party's basic tenet this election year or any election year can never be a wasted one.

The libertarians

David Bergland, the Libertarian Party's candidate for president, was through Little Rock the other day peddling that almost total personal liberty that's the political faith of these free-souled folks. Bergland will get some votes here and elsewhere this fall — but

Last paragraph in Ark. editorial.

A Viable Third Party Might Well Take Over U.S. Politics—Soon

THIRD PARTIES IN AMERICA: Citizen Response to Major Party Failure

By Steven J. Rosenstone,
Roy L. Behr and Edward H. Lazarus
Princeton University Press. 266 pp. \$25; paper, \$8.95

Reviewed by T.R. Reid

The great irony of the fascination with "new ideas" in the current presidential campaign is that many professional politicians and pundits actually seem to believe that useful new ideas might emanate from Democrats or Republicans. All our history says that this is balderdash.

The one common thread linking the genuinely important and beneficial new ideas in American political history—abolition of slavery, women's suffrage, direct election of senators, the progressive income tax, the 14th Amendment, regulation of monopolies, farm price supports, Social Security—is that they all were first proposed by third parties.

As Steven J. Rosenstone, a political science professor at Yale, and his students Roy L. Behr and Edward H. Lazarus demonstrate in this interesting text, it is a fundamental truth of American politics that new ideas—or, to use the term these political scientists prefer, "policy innovations"—tend to come from third, or "minor," parties.

"The major parties remain preoccupied with issues that defined the party alignment in the last critical election," they write. "The major parties are often unable or unwilling to deal with new issues, even those concerning a sizable portion of the electorate." As a result, "minor parties . . . are a weapon citizens can use to force the major parties to be more accountable."

But is that the only role a third party can play in American politics? Are we doomed to government forever by the stagnant, centrist and fatally timid "major" parties?

The authors seem to conclude that we are: "No permanent third party able to garner a sizable share of the popular vote threatens to emerge." But there is also evidence in this study to suggest (at least to optimists) that a viable third party might well take over American politics within the next few elections.

The book depicts clearly the institutional constraints that help to keep the two established parties at center stage despite their demonstrated unpopularity among a large majority of the populace.

One crucial element was the Founding Fathers' choice of the single-member district plurality vote mechanism for choosing members of Congress. "Unlike a proportional representation system where 20 percent of the votes usually yields some seats," the book notes, "in a single-member district plurality system a party can receive 20 percent of the votes in every state and yet not win a single seat." Jesse Jackson notwithstanding, it is this system, more than

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any runoff primary, that keeps minority groups and parties out of office.

But the statesmen whom the two major parties have sent to Congress and the state legislatures have worked assiduously as well to see to it that there can be no genuine challenge from anyone who is not willing to play along with the big two. The book sets forth a whole series of statutes, ranging from restrictive ballot-access laws to the Federal Election Commission Act that our leaders have written to make sure we never get a serious chance to vote them out.

Nonetheless, disgust with the major parties has been so common that alternatives have sprung up repeatedly through American history. Since 1840, when the modern two-party system emerged, there have been more than 100 third parties in the United States.

The most engaging part of this book is the 80-page section in the middle that provides a quick and fascinating history of these alternative political movements. The authors demonstrate that the notion of "third party" was quite different a century ago than it is today.

In the 19th century, third parties tended to be genuine political parties that went out and recruited candidates. Now, with some distinguished exceptions, opposition to the major parties tends to center on a candidate (e.g., George Wallace, John Anderson) and party apparatus is diminished or nonexistent.

For the most part, third parties have succeeded in America not by winning elections but rather by planting the seeds of important new ideas. "Frequently, the major parties respond rationally to this signal that there are disgruntled voters and adopt the third parties' positions . . . Third parties usually lose the battle but, through co-optation, often win the war."

Still, there is hope. There has been one case where a third party, propelled by the force of a burning issue that neither of the two major parties had the courage to deal with, took over the national government with-

in a decade of its birth. This was, of course, the antislavery party, the Republicans, who ran their first presidential candidate in 1856 and took the White House four years later.

As I read it, this book suggests that something like that could happen again soon. "In recent years the United States seems to have entered another period of major party breakdown and third party strength." The basis for this hopeful conclusion lies in the political scientists' concept of "party systems."

This view of our political history argues that the United States has experienced five different "party systems" since 1789, with the realigning elections of 1828, 1860, 1896, and 1932 as the turning points between one system and the next.

The authors demonstrate that third parties have historically fared best at the end of a party system, when the basis for allegiance to the major parties is breaking down. The current "party system," dating back to Franklin Roosevelt's first election, has already lasted longer than any previous system. It is clear that the loyalties established in 1932 are fraying.

Although the authors are unwilling to predict that a third party will emerge at the next realignment, their book, in the tradition of careful, open-minded academic analysis, leaves that possibility on the table.

While we wait to see what our future will bring, "Third Parties in America" offers a thoughtful and intriguing analysis of the history and status of "other parties" in this two-party republic.

T.R. Reid, Denver bureau chief of The Washington Post, is the author of "The Chip: The Microelectronics Revolution and the Men Who Invented It," to be published in January.