



## Hedgehogs, Wacko Birds, and Runaways

Forget about Republican chairman Reince Priebus's "autopsy" report on the GOP. It's full of stale recommendations about messaging and process. The next new thing in the Republican Party is libertarianism.

Look at Sen. Rand Paul of Kentucky. He roused the conservative movement at the CPAC convention last weekend and won their straw poll. Sen. Paul is a Tea Party hero, and the Tea Party is the only dynamic movement in the Republican Party right now.

The Greek poet Archilochus wrote, "The fox knows many things. The hedgehog knows one big thing." Libertarians are hedgehogs. They know one big thing: government is bad. Everything flows from that. "As government grows, liberty becomes marginalized," Paul told the CPAC meeting.

That's the core of the Tea Party philosophy. It's a more radical version of what Republicans have traditionally believed about government and the economy—that taxes are evil and government spending is bad.

Libertarians take that one step further, however. They oppose government restrictions on social issues like gay rights and drugs. That's abhorrent to the religious

right, who believe government should encourage traditional values. Paul alluded to the libertarian position when he asked "whether we should put a kid in jail for the nonviolent crime of drug use."

"The new GOP—the GOP that will win again—will need to embrace liberty in both the economic and personal sphere," Paul said.

Actually, libertarians take their anti-government philosophy two steps further. They also oppose an activist foreign policy. Rand Paul's father, former Rep. Ron Paul, is the godfather of the libertarian movement. When

he ran for President in 2008 and 2012, he opposed the Iraq War, the *Patriot Act*, and a threatened military strike against Iran. Hawkish Republicans were horrified. Paul did not win a single primary either year.

But Ron Paul's antiwar positions, as well as his views on social issues, won him support from young voters. Paul carried voters under 30 in the 2012 New Hampshire Republican primary, where he came in second.

In his CPAC remarks, Rand Paul positioned himself as a champion of young voters, saying "The Facebook generation can detect falsehood and hypocrisy a mile away. They are the

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**— Sen. Rand Paul**

core of the 'leave me alone' coalition."

Paul captured national attention this month with his 13-hour filibuster of the Obama Administration's drone program. Sen. Ted Cruz, a brash young Cuban-American Republican, joined in the filibuster. This week, Paul endorsed a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, telling a Latino business group, "If you wish to live and work in America, then we will find a place for you." Those positions are likely to bolster his credentials with young voters.

But can someone with Rand Paul's views on defense and foreign policy really win support in the GOP? Well, look at what just happened with the sequester.

When the sequester was first devised in 2011 as a doomsday machine, Democrats expected that Republicans would never allow cuts in military spending of that magnitude to go into effect. They were wrong. Tea Party Republicans and libertarians have no particular commitment to protect the defense budget. To them, spending is spending. They are perfectly willing to allow the defense cuts to go into effect.

The sequester does bother Republican hawks like Lindsey Graham and John McCain. McCain dismissed Paul, Cruz, and the new generation of conservatives as "wacko birds." Cruz told a cheering CPAC audience, "If standing for liberty and standing for the Constitution means you're a 'wacko bird,' then count me a proud wacko bird."

Libertarianism represents a radical new direction for the Republican Party. "The GOP of old has grown stale and moss-covered," Sen. Paul said, adding mischievously, "I don't think we need to name any names here, do we?" His views are bound to provoke confrontations with neo-

conservatives, who favor an aggressive U.S. posture in the world, as well as the religious right. There will be blood.

Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush warned his party that "way too many people believe Republicans are anti-immigrant, anti-woman, anti-science, anti-gay, anti-worker—and the list goes on." Chairman Priebus said the party needs a more "welcoming" message. But his "autopsy" gave no indication of what that message should be.

Libertarians have an answer: anti-government. Political sociologist Seymour Martin Lipset once wrote that the United States was largely settled by "runaways from authority"—people who came here to escape oppressive governments and churches. That's why the U.S. is fertile soil for libertarianism. Especially among young Americans. Running away from authority is in their nature. ■

