

Remaking Politics By The Seat Of Our Pants

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MADISON -



American democracy is caught on the horns of a dilemma. Most Americans are feeling fed up with the Republicans and let down by the Democrats – with good reason – as both major parties are failing the country. Yet a third party isn't the answer. Like it or not, America has a two-party system.

Ours was not set up as a parliamentary democracy, where competing factions can join forces and form coalition governments. We don't have fusion voting, or instant runoff voting, or proportional representation, or any of the mechanisms that would allow third parties or independent candidates to successfully compete in our elections and hold power in our government.

This is why third-party or independent bids for office – whether it's Ross Perot one time or Ralph Nader another – regularly lead to dead ends.

So how do we get regular people back in the driver's seat of our government when both major parties are catering to a privileged few at the expense of everyone else, but our system is structured to enforce a two-party arrangement?

We have to start with two articles of faith. First, it hasn't always been like it is now, and doesn't have to be like this. Second, there is a way out of the trap we're in.

We need to make the major parties – or at least one of them for starters – better. They won't change unless forced. It's like the basic law of physics . . . an object at rest will remain at rest, unless some force makes it move. A corrupt political establishment will stay corrupt and failing parties will keep failing us, unless we make them change their ways.

When past generations freed themselves from similar traps, they started by shedding old labels and fashioning themselves a new identity. They attached that newly minted brand to breathtakingly ambitious agendas. They were not bashful in the least about stating their aspirations for the future. And then they effectively forced those aspirations down the throats of the parties. When the smoke cleared, there were not three parties or four or five. There were two. But the parties were transformed. They were reconnected to the masses.

Current conditions dictate that this must be done again.

Given how messed up politics is at the moment, we cannot in good conscience call ourselves Republicans or Democrats, liberals or conservatives. One party is scary and the other is scared. Labels like liberal and conservative no longer mean what the dictionary says they mean. Now they are little more than the political equivalent of ethnic slurs. We deserve better and need something new.

We are commoners and we are politically homeless. The royals of our political system made us so.

We aim to make a household for the politically homeless and in so doing transform parties that are failing us. And we are pulling together to make it happen. With an organizing committee of citizens from all of Wisconsin's eight congressional districts and 19 different counties, we just formed Blue Jean Nation.

Blue Jean Nation is not a party. It is a community, and a movement in the making. We are neither elephant nor ass, but recognize that our country has a two-party system and plan to work within that system to get the parties truly working for all of us and not just a favored few who are well connected politically.

Our end goal is to make common sense in government and concern for the common good far less uncommon. To reach that goal, we will work every day against political privilege.

We will do it from the ground up, with plain people leading the way, by the seat of our pants. There's no waiting for political messiahs to come along.

When faced with economic and political threats eerily similar to today's conditions, past generations straightened things out on more than one occasion. I refuse to believe there is something so different about us or wrong with us that renders us less capable of making change than those who came before us. In so many ways, we have more going for us now than they did then.

Political reboots have happened before. Another one is desperately needed.

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