



BOOM!

A Revolting Situation



*The failure of ideological politics
The disappointment of ideological government*



THOMAS RICHARD HARRY

ALSO BY THOMAS RICHARD HARRY

The Delicate Illusion (1999)

The Gathering of the Clan (2009)

BOOM!

A Revolting Situation



The failure of ideological politics,
The disappointment of ideological government

THOMAS RICHARD HARRY

iUniverse, Inc.
Bloomington

Boom! A Revolting Situation

The failure of ideological politics, The disappointment of ideological government

Copyright © 2012 Thomas Richard Harry

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced by any means, graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping or by any information storage retrieval system without the written permission of the publisher except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

iUniverse books may be ordered through booksellers or by contacting:

iUniverse
1663 Liberty Drive
Bloomington, IN 47403
www.iuniverse.com
1-800-Authors (1-800-288-4677)

Because of the dynamic nature of the Internet, any Web addresses or links contained in this book may have changed since publication and may no longer be valid. The views expressed in this work are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher, and the publisher hereby disclaims any responsibility for them.

Cover design by Victoria Valentine, www.victoriavalentine.com

Any people depicted in stock imagery provided by Thinkstock are models, and such images are being used for illustrative purposes only.

Certain stock imagery © Thinkstock.

ISBN: 978-1-4759-2733-7 (sc)

ISBN: 978-1-4759-2735-1 (hc)

ISBN: 978-1-4759-2734-4 (e)

Printed in the United States of America

iUniverse rev. date: 8/3/2012

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface		vii
Introduction		ix
Prelude	Belfast, Northern Ireland	1
Chapter I	It's a Matter of Choice	7
Chapter II	A Revolting Situation	10
Chapter III	Government: For Better or for Worse—For Whom?	18
Chapter IV	An American Journey	30
Chapter V	Looking Back a Little Further	40
Chapter VI	Catching Up With Today	45
Chapter VII	Digesting Almost Two Hundred Years	57
Chapter VIII	Liberalism and Conservatism	64
Chapter IX	Republicans, Democrats & Independents	75
Chapter X	The Rising Visibility of the Independent Voter	105
Chapter XI	Independent Parties and Support Groups Today	117
Chapter XII	The Independent Voter: A Profile and a Purpose	130
Chapter XIII	An Independent Political Option: A Ballot-Box Revolt of the Disenfranchised ... and Possibly the Rest of Us	152
Chapter XIV	The Superstructure: How It Fits Together	159
Chapter XV	Leadership and Character	180

Chapter XVI	An Independent's View of the Propriety (or Impropriety) of Special-Interest Influences on Government	188
Chapter XVII	An Independent Tax Solution	205
Chapter XVIII	Social Security	228
Chapter XIX	Working Poverty: A Minimum Wage Issue	243
Chapter XX	And There's More to Resolve	265
Chapter XXI	The Legitimate Scope and Proper Purpose of Government	284
Chapter XXII	The Results of the Revolution	306
Notes		309
Selected Bibliography		319

PREFACE



Philosophically, I'm a liberal.

Culturally, I'm a moderate conservative.

Politically, I'm an Independent. Today, as we'll see, that makes me somewhat of a revolutionary!

Now in some ways, that last concept is a difficult one to get my arms around: me, a revolutionary? Balderdash! I've never thought of myself as a revolutionary. I certainly don't believe I act like one, or at least like most revolutionaries are depicted. Admittedly though, I do pretty strongly favor change in our political arena that would, hopefully, result in an improvement in the results of government our politics gives us of late. On the surface, that wouldn't appear too big a challenge.

I'm an Independent because I simply don't see our dominant political parties either willing or able to make the kind of moves necessary to re-Balance our country. That's "Balance with a capital B," which I'll go into in some detail here.

When just a few say they're dissatisfied with the results of our politics, this can probably be explained away by the old adage, "You can't please all the people, all of the time." That's human nature, you can't. That's why options and alternatives in the form of competing political parties developed to try to provide as much inclusiveness as reasonably possible, around which like-minded people could coalesce. And it's why majority rule needs to be the

deciding factor in democratic self-government. But when, over a period of time (years), the number of people such parties are apparently not pleasing—because they no longer endorse them as their political representative of choice when registering to vote—continues to rise until those people amount to a plurality of all who vote, you shouldn't be able (or even willing) to brush such dissatisfaction aside in such a casual manner.

What such political disconnect as we are experiencing today has to signify is that the political options (the Parties) that developed to supply choice, to offer different strokes for different folks, simply must not be doing an acceptable job any longer. When this happens, and the powers that be either fail to recognize it, refuse or are unable to make changes to correct the situation, what option(s) do the disaffected have if they wish to continue to participate in the political process? One option is to seek change outside the established order. That implies revolt (certainly from the viewpoint of the established order). For those so seeking, at a minimum it represents the desire for the goal of revolution, which is positive change.

How such positive change might come about is our subject here.

INTRODUCTION



Is it possible to be in the midst of a revolution and not be aware of it? Well, consider this:

Brook Park, Ohio is a white, ethnic working-class suburb of Cleveland. Anthony D'Amico, president of the Brook Park Democratic Club, commented recently that Brook Park used to be 1,000 percent Democratic. Before a recent election he looked at the registration rolls from the town's four wards, and it shocked him: Democrats, 4,448, Republicans 882, Independents, 6,508! That's a tangible sign of "discontent."

Loudoun County, Virginia, about a forty-minute drive west from Washington D.C., has been one of the fastest growing counties in America; traditionally a strong Republican bastion. Today Loudoun County politicians say the county comprises, roughly, one-third Republicans, one-third Democrats and one-third Independents. County voting now closely mirrors the state at large. That's a pretty clear indication of "protest."

In California, registration statistics for presidential primaries between 1992 and 2008 show an 83 percent increase in Independents, or those declining to state a party preference. Today in California, the two major parties combined share of voter preferences has declined from 87.1 percent in 1992 to 76.0 percent. Almost all the growth in registration rolls has been in independent voters.¹ That's a visible feeling of "revolt" in the making

Is this experience indicative of a larger trend here? Twenty-nine states plus

Washington, D.C. offer persons the option of declaring a party affiliation. Party registration totals thus provide a snapshot of the overall partisan balance within a state. Comparison of these statistics over time provides a broader picture of overall political trends. Overall, a continued registration trend away from the major political parties is evident, one that observers began noticing in the 1970's. The answer to the question seems to be, yes, it is indicative of a larger trend.

Signs of discontent... indications of protest... feelings of revolt in the making... and the up-swing in political Independents. Chapters I & II deal with these themes, providing a springboard to examine the issues behind this already in-process but as yet largely unrecognized—or at least unacknowledged—revolution. It's a clear and nationally documented fact: While unquestionably disorganized, somewhat amorphous and leaderless at this stage, a self-propelling political revolution is underway! Its goal seems well developed, even as its idea struggles to slowly take form.

America is generating an enormous wave of political discontent. Recent polls show an increasing number of Americans believe things have pretty seriously gotten off on the wrong track; that America is headed in the wrong direction. In 1995 this public perception was around 66%, not good even back then, but it has risen more or less steadily to around 80% today. Most would probably call that a pretty clear signal of discontent. With what? In the final analysis, with the results of government, obviously. And this is resulting in *disconnect* from those political parties we have to choose from to lead government, to set and then carry out our national priorities, the Democrats and/or the Republicans. Under our electoral system, those Parties have been for over the past century and a half— and continue to be today— our practical political options. We'll see just why (Chapter XI) this is the case.

It's this situation we address here: two antagonistic political options, as described in Chapter IX, to choose from to run our national (and international) affairs that, increasingly, voters are deciding they do not support, at least not publically, when registering to vote. This results in a plurality of Americans, for all practical purposes, being forced to choose a least-worst political option when going to the polls. That's a democratic absurdity! But this is the political situation that has festered now for at least half a century as demonstrated by

our political parties—neither of which commands anything close to majority voter backings—losing popular support, and we seem to be getting nothing to offer the voter as an alternative. Why not? Well, we’ll explain why and look at some practical alternatives in Chapter XIII (options—specifically an Independent political option) to correct this deteriorating situation. What we have today is an increasingly intolerable political soap-opera-like situation; a political status quo that badly needs to be “shaken up.” It badly needs to be subjected to new ideas, such as this one of an Independent political option, and to the goal of a political insurgency: positive change. That’s positive change from the voters’ point of view.

How can it be that, by most accounts, the strongest, richest and most advanced country in the world, perhaps the strongest and richest the world has ever seen, is unable to govern itself in a responsive, responsible, effective and self-satisfying manner for so many? Well, maybe that statement is simply not true. Maybe it really does? No, if you can believe what the preponderance of American people themselves tell us they think about their government and the direction they believe it is leading the country—the wrong direction by most accounts, it’s true. Is it the system, the people chosen to lead government, the expectations of the governed or the intractability of the problems the country faces that’s to blame? None of the above. It’s our politics, pure and simple politics, and today’s situation was envisioned over half a century ago now!

The argument made here for the cause of this failure to govern itself in a responsive, responsible, effective and self-satisfying manner is clear and simple: it is an increasingly oppositional ideological political approach to issues that makes it impossible for our existing two major parties to govern. Should you doubt this claim, this fact, in effect, I call your attention to the instance of just such an oppositional ideological—stalemating—approach, by both Parties, surrounding the question of raising the country’s debt ceiling recently. Chapters IV, V and VI lay out the historical genesis of this intensifying situation, while Chapters VII, VIII and IX highlight and analyze this issue, moving progressively from the general to the specific. In fact, it’s an argument that suggests governing is no longer the parties’ primary concern. Winning elections for ideological objectives is. There’s a difference between the politics of campaigning and the politics of governing. In today’s

political environment, the latter has been almost completely subordinated to the former. How did this come about? Well, it did take some time.

Shortly after World War II, a blue-ribbon committee, the American Political Science Association (APSA) Committee on Political Parties, took a close look at the state of American politics, and concluded our politics was “adrift.” It made a number of recommendations to change how the parties functioned, to give the American people a clearer distinction between political choices that the Committee discerned available at that time. Little did they foresee the consequences of such political tinkering as they endorsed some fifty years later. We’ll look more closely at the influence of this Committee on our politics, then and now, and see how it has impacted us today in Chapter IX.

What is needed and what is developed in the chapters to come is a path to increased political choice. It can serve all voters, but, specifically, it is choice aimed at today’s Independents to overcome this void, this least-worst choice situation for political Independents. But that “choice” needs to be a clear alternative, not just an echo of what already is available. They have already “turned their backs” on that.

This is the revolutionary challenge. It’s a challenge because that path to alternative choice must lead to more than just changing personnel, more than just “throwing the bums out.” We throw the bums out regularly now, and nothing of substance seems to change. It’s revolutionary in that it will only occur outside the established political status quo. That is a key point. It has to do with political behavior. Like it or not, and it’s not particularly likeable, people are guided chiefly by their own self-interests and the motivations of people in the political process are no different from those of people in any other activity. Bureaucrats strive to advance their own careers; and politicians seek election or reelection to office for primarily personal ends.

One key conclusion of public choice theory, which supports the above description of personal motivation, is that simply changing the identities of the people who hold public office will not produce major changes in policy outcomes. Electing other people will not, by itself, lead to much better government. Adopting the assumption that all individuals, be they voters, politicians or bureaucrats, are motivated more by self-interest than by public

interest evokes a Madisonian perspective on the problems of democratic governance. Like that founding father, public choice recognizes that men are not angels—highlighted in Chapter III—and focuses on the importance of the institutional rules under which people pursue their own objectives. “In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.” (*Federalist*, no 51). Chapters XII – XIV lay out in some detail how a proposed Independent political option would contribute to this objective, and all within our existing political system. There is a bit of irony here in that some of the actions called for herein clearly mirror some of the suggestions made over sixty years ago in that now all but forgotten APSA committee report on political parties.

While peoples’ motives may be suspect, they—both people and their motives—can and often do make a difference. In Chapter XV we examine the character and nature as well as the manner of those we elect to office. While a clear understanding of mission, or purpose, along with a well-defined program of achieving the mission is a given, those whom we entrust with carrying out the purpose of government are of significant importance. Not in the sense of appearance and appeal on the campaign trail, although those are welcome attributes for anyone seeking public office, but for their basic commitment, their moral, ethical and intellectual characters. Such positives in people, and the way they display them and handle themselves in the public eye set the tone more generally in society at large. It all starts at the top. Considering the general esteem, or lack thereof, that most politicians seem to be held in, we as the voting public may not be doing all we should in considering this selection process.

Chapters XVI to XX put on display a number of what Independents—or at least this Independent—would no doubt consider significant public—and a few not so public— issues. These are issues that affect us at a personal level; issues that not only need attention, but solution and resolution. These are not in any prioritized position, with the exception of Chapter XVI, a look at special-interest influences on government. This is a perennial issue that seems (1) to be getting worse—between 2000 and 2005 the number of registered lobbyists in Washington, D.C. attempting to manipulate

government doubled to nearly 35,000 (35,000!);² and (2) the funding it provides politicians is increasingly corrosive to the broad democratic process. An early, comprehensive and successful resolution of this issue is a must for any political revolution to be successful.

Two classes of issues are highlighted in these five chapters. The first are examples of issues most feel not only need attention (of which they get a lot) but resolution (of which they get little). They spell out how Independents might well agree such issues can best be resolved to serve the greatest good for the greatest number. Taxes (Chapter XVII) and Social Security (Chapter XVIII) are examples. Conflicting ideologies represent the primary problem in issue resolution.

Matters that are of primary and direct importance to the subject of Balance in our society (See Chapter XIII) comprise the other class of issues. Absent addressing and then resolving basic questions inherent in these issues, such as those surrounding the ballot box and the responsibility of capitalism in society—is it our servant or our master, or something else—the question of a necessary and proper Balance will remain purposefully clouded and obscured. Special-interest political influence (Chapter XVI) and working-poverty questions (Chapter XIX) are examples.

These by no means cover the waterfront of pressing issues facing America, but they are critical issues for the reasons just suggested for which resolution seem to depend upon political change; change that can only be accomplished by the sort of political revolution proposed. This is why they are highlighted. Nonetheless, it would be remiss not to at least “nod to” a few other current festering issues; issues perhaps not as critical to our argument for revolution but certainly important to most of the people and deserving of resolution which is not dependent upon extreme ideological views. We do so for a number of these in Chapter XX.

Our next to final chapter focuses on the future, detailing what we believe an Independent political option can and should result in, which is better managing the scope of government with a commitment of producing better Balance in our society. Admittedly, it’s controversial, but what genuine revolution isn’t? When we began our case here we said it was necessary to pursue the goal of revolution, which is positive change; real change. Politically

what we currently endure is just a game of musical chairs; when the election-music stops and the chairs refill the same basic game simply continues. That's what we have today.

The political status quo won't (can't?) permit change any other way than via an avenue such as proposed herein. It seems reasonable to believe that those who find the approach developed herein attractive, be they Independents or other, would not consider any result short of what is proposed as being revolutionary, as offering the potential for real change. If that would not be the case, then there would seem to be little political motivation for them to join this bandwagon. Democratically, political motivation is important.

I must here, for lack of a better place, raise a couple of "housekeeping" items. First, regarding my presentation, or writing style. While the views and opinions herein are my own, or "this Independent's," unless otherwise indicated, I nonetheless prefer to use the corporate "we," or "our," when speaking with my reading audience rather than always referring to me, myself and I although, obviously, they are synonymous with these first-person designations. In some instances, "we" refers to you, the reader, and me. It's idiosyncratic, no doubt, but is a personal preference for which I ask your indulgence.

Secondly, I read, as did so many, several of James Michener's wonderful historical novels (Actually, I'm currently in the midst of re-reading his *Return to Paradise*—love it!). Inevitably and predictably, each one started out almost at the beginning of geological time, it seemed, as he developed a base and background for the story to come. It was often tedious, but unquestionably contributed to the story as it was developed. In the end, such immersion in detail at the beginning proved all too valuable to the believability and enjoyment of the story he unfolded. I confess to being a disciple of Michener in this regard.

Finally, I claim no special or apocalyptic insight that makes me uniquely qualified to write this book. Admittedly I have spent time (years!) studying and researching what I write about here. It's become an avocation—this will be my third work on generally the same subject. It covers the American political arena, ideological politics so apparent—so transparent it seems to those of us outside looking in—the results of which are becoming all too painfully clear

for average Americans: Our politics, never sweet, has become toxic. Fewer and fewer voters want to be identified as supporters of either political party. The result: attenuating bi-polar politics that is creating a huge void in the moderate-middle of American political preference and practice—so agrees former Conservative Senator Jack Danforth from Missouri in his book, *Faith and Politics*. Today we have a political arena that ignores, is indifferent to, more and more Americans. That's certainly a threat to a true liberal democracy. One result already apparent to most is inept appearing government, the result of self-serving appearing politicians. This is allowing our society to get dangerously out of Balance, as I will explain. And all this is going on in plain sight. In my humble view, any observing politically moderate average American, any Tom, Dick or Harriet, is probably as potentially qualified as I am to tell this story and propose the book's courses of action. It's really that obvious, and that serious. It just so happens, it's me.

This disclaimer may raise the question in some minds of just why so much importance is attached to our political activities. Most of us don't—and don't want to have to—eat, sleep and dream about politics; we all have lives to lead. It's because, as we will point out and expand on as our case is developed (Chapter III, for example), it is a country's political system that draws together, or integrates, society. Within the political system, decisions are made that are binding upon the whole of society (taxes, spending, rules for governing, war, social programs, civil rights, civic improvements, citizenship, international relations, etc.). Thus the political arena holds the key to any understanding of the overall ideological and social systems under which a country, or just about any community, functions. And many today are of the opinion that ours is not functioning all that well!

It's a primary objective of this book to answer the original question posed above of how the greatest country in the world can govern itself in a more responsive, responsible, effective, and self-satisfying manner. If not this, then what? If not now, then when?

Boom!

T. R. Harry
April 2012

PRELUDE
BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND



A guy walks into a pub in the western outskirts of Belfast, looks around at the small group of men quietly downing their pints—who have all but ignored his arrival—raises a clenched fist in a sign of defiance and declares for all to hear, “Down with the Monarchy; Home-rule is our right,” and waits for the response he expects. No heads turn. The bar-keep continues to shine his glasses and the cat napping in the window-well closes its eyes again.

“Are ya all deaf,” he stammers. “I’m here for the lot of you; I’ve come with the message that we can all be free; to invite you to join in a revolution; to demand our rights as free Irishmen. To take the initiative and make the pursuit of liberty a reality, now! Come, join me.”

Still no reaction, aside from a rather long and purposeful belch from somewhere amid the small crowd of drinkers. The newcomer looks around, unbelieving. “Well” he asks incredulously?

Finally one of the older of the drinkers puts his glass down, tilts back his hat then turns to the rabble-rouser and asks: “Well what? What’s this talk of revolution? Do you not know that the IRA itself gave up on that idea some years ago now? Not that they have abandoned their goal of a united Ireland. Just that they’ve decided it’s a better approach to let their political fellas, Sinn Fein, do it with the ballot box. And we agree with that. It’s called legitimacy.

We've had enough of the Trouble, raging war and fighting our neighbor in the name of politics and God these past fifty or so years—seems it was forever, now. It's a worthless, futile bloody waste whose time is past, except for a hand-full of malcontents who still want to fight on, even today. But we know them for what they are, radicals; terrorists. You want home-rule? You want to change the world? Go out and convince your fellow 'revolutionaries' to vote for it. Don't ask us to go out and commit mayhem and carnage in our communities again in the name of it." He turns back to his drinking buddies, leaving the newcomer in rather shocked amazement.

"But," protests the rabble-rouser, "I thought you'd welcome someone who wanted to help you overturn an unpopular political system bent more on perpetuating itself than governing for you."

"Where you been, Sonny" one of the others asks. "Haven't you seen enough of what your kind of revolution yields: neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother? Where have you been hiding these past ten or twenty years?"

A slight pause, then the answer in a muted, rather apologetic voice, "America."

The cat stretches, yawns, turns around to get the sun on the other flank and returns to its slumber, as the pub's population of eight to ten turns, almost as one, and stares at the stranger.

The original speaker says, almost incredulously, "America? What in the good Lord's name are you doing over here? If ye've a mind to be a political radical, why aren't you doing so over there where you come from? There's no end of opportunity right there in your own back yard, so we understand from all the news. You got your own on-going bloody political mess. Why choose to mix in ours?"

Neither a sound, nor glass touches the lips, as they await an answer. After what seems like enough time to down two pints, the stranger, eyes cast downward, murmurs, "Because no one over there will listen to me either. No one over there is happy with the results of our politics, but no one wants to do anything about it but complain, that's why. I thought you fiercely patriotic Irishmen would jump at such an offer. Apparently, I was mistaken. All you want to do is complain as well."

Silence is the response from the group. At long last, one of the men with a cane in his hand points it at the stranger and asks him, “Have you ever been in a revolution, son; a real revolution with guns, and explosives, not words; with fight’n and die’n, not just debate’n? Well many of us, myself included, have; and what have we to recommend it as a way to settle differences? I’ll tell you what: not a damn thing! Nothing but scars, lost loved ones, wasted years and bitterness. And you suggest we take up ‘the Cause’ again? My response to you is been there, done that and don’t see any reason to do it again. Go on home and preach your sermon of revolution there, and good luck to you. We don’t need nor want any more of it over here.”

“Neither do they,” he whispers, “but they need it. They really do. Why won’t they listen? What good to people is a democracy in name only; what good is freedom or liberty if the original meanings, intent and implications have been hollowed out by an entrenched political elite and their supporters to serve their own ends? What does the vote mean if the choice you’re offered is effectively curtailed, coercing you to support just those elite in maintaining the status quo? I can’t count those who have pointed out America’s political shortcomings in recent years, but it seems few if any are inclined to act—oh, they listen, they nod in agreement, but no one acts. And it’s hard to act if you have to follow the rules established by just those who need ‘purging.’ They don’t want to be thrown out, and their supporters don’t want to lose their political cover. How do you go about changing a long entrenched power structure that makes its own rules to limit just such an effort? An elite that gives lip-service to good government, but not much else; one that puts getting or staying in power above good governing? Revolution seems the only avenue open to those who feel strongly about the growing political problems—problems that seem to go on forever in America. Where, no matter the results at the ballot box, nothing of significance seems to change. A revolution should be welcomed, given the situation. At least some of us thought it should be. But, no one answered the call, so I came here to help you with yours.”

The hush in the pub turned to quiet mumbling, a bit of shoe shuffling, and nodding of heads. Then the bar-keep pulled a pint of ale and one of the locals handed it to the stranger, inviting him to sit awhile. He sat, and took

a long pull at the glass, while the pub locals gathered around him in a half circle, kind of like a jury staring down at a defendant.

The man with the cane said to him, "Son, what do you think a revolution should attempt? Should it start by being destructive, blowing things up and killing people, because that's what most 'traditional' revolutions do; they try to overthrow by illegitimate force, hiding from the light and hiding themselves. Their ends, they claim, justify their means; tearing down, trampling the rights of others, putting fear into the hearts of all. We know. We know. That's not the way to solve problems, or promote positive change. Oh, now that's not to say that the idea of revolution, nor the goal of revolution is of no consideration," he adds as if to soften his criticism.

"It is, yes it is," quickly adds another one of the locals. "The goal of revolution, to produce a change, is sound. It's the fight'n, the kill'n and the maiming and the treachery of revolution that is so difficult for all to bear. Still, most of us still think about revolution all the time!"

"Really?" asks the American stranger?

"Oh yes, we do. We do. And our elected representatives know we do. They know our hearts are Irish, as are most of theirs, today. You see, we have a good deal of 'home-rule' now. But we all know it is at the pleasure of the Parliament across the sea, not completely unlike your situation a couple of hundred years ago. It's kind of like a permanent cease fire between us which neither is eager to see broken. And yes, we did achieve some of it, perhaps a bit too much, by what you seem to long for, insurgency. You already went through one revolution, ya know; do you really think ya need another of the same, this time among your own? And our situation here is a wee bit different from yours in America. Some of us Irish are still fighting the Reformation, or at least the results of it, a divide between Catholics and Protestants. No, your situation across the Atlantic is much simpler than ours, much simpler, even today. It's only political, not religious."

"Some of us aren't so sure about that."

"Well, take our advice: Don't give up on the *idea*, and the *goal* of revolution. They're good ones. But make it one that moves people to support the goal through available peaceful means, not a revolution that declares

you have to hate first, fight first, and tear down first in order to rebuild later. Chances are few will be pleased with those results.”

“But, look at the Middle East today. There are multiple revolutions underway—some already successful—all in the name of political change. It doesn’t just happen; you have to make it happen.”

“True, lad, true. Some successful, you say? Well, that depends upon your definition of success. It also depends upon the goal of the revolution. I agree, some seem to be inducing change; but successful, only time will tell. But in those situations you mention, the revolutions aren’t primarily political, as we understand it in most western countries with histories of democratic rule. There it’s tyranny vs. liberalism. In all situations the goal may be the same, but unfortunately, in those North African and Mid-East countries now experiencing upheaval, it’s as much an ideological revolution as a political one, and it starts mostly as a peaceful protest on the part of those seeking change. But they have no truly effective ballot box, as you do, to express their desire for change which, other things being equal in a democratic atmosphere, can bring about such change. All they can do is push, push, push. And many suffer a price for this. In the end, in these cases, soft force is usually met with lethal force. That’s not the kind of revolution you should be considering, or promoting. You in America are not in the same situation, for which you lads should be eternally grateful.”

“But that’s part of the concern. Are we (effectively) losing our political rights, our liberal democracy without even being aware of it? A French child of revolution, Alexis de Tocqueville, raised this possibility way back in the nineteenth century. Some can see his prophetic concern coming to pass. It’s really kind of scary. But, nobody is listening today. Nobody is concerned they might be losing something that they have always just taken for granted. That’s even scarier.”

“Well, we don’t have an answer for you there, lad. All we can tell you is that the kind of revolution you have in mind isn’t the answer. Go on home and think it over. As we say, the idea, the goal of revolution is worthwhile. The issue is how do you structure it to be positive, not negative? Revolution starts because of dissatisfaction, dissatisfaction that does not otherwise seem correctable. Find that means to correct it, short of killing your fellow

countrymen, as you did once, and you will find enough followers for your cause to mount a successful campaign for change. And good luck to you.”

His glass empty, the by now pretty quiet American leaves quietly, amid a round of handshaking, backslapping, advice not to give up and wishes of good luck.

“Well, Billy,” one of the locals asks the man with the cane, “what do you think? What will become of our just departed friend? Any chance he and his think-a-likes can pull it off?”

“Oh hell, probably not. A revolution isn’t easy to get started, ya know, even if it’s got a downhill slope, and I’m of a mind they probably could benefit from one, or at least the goal of one, over there! But, that’s their problem. Benny, my boy, my glass is but empty. Whose shout is it anyway?”

CHAPTER I

It's a Matter of Choice



“Choice? What do you mean a matter of choice? Americans have choice—all the choice they need. Good Lord, people, why are you always complaining about the lack of political choice? If you are conservatives, you have the Republican Party and all the third-parties of that leaning. Liberals have the Democratic Party and its further-left alternatives. It’s worked this way for over a hundred years now. What more do you need?”

“Yes, sir, we know. But, that’s the problem. We no longer have much confidence in or are satisfied with the results of the governments they provide, either of them”

“I don’t understand. If you don’t like them, vote for someone else. There are options.”

“Well, yes, there are. Most all of them though are more ideologically extreme than the Big-Two. True, most of us call ourselves conservatives or liberals. The problem is that we’re not all conservatives or liberals to the same degree; certainly not to the degree the Parties or those more extreme must view us. We don’t feel they’re really representing “us” when handed the reins of government; just that they have used us to get there. We believe that needs to change.”

“Then, as voters, you need to let them know your feelings about that.”

“We have; clearly we have. We no longer register to vote as Party supporters. This exodus from their midst doesn’t seem to change anything. They don’t seem

to get the point, which is, they may be our only electoral options, but they don't represent our preferences for the outcome of government any longer. You might say that under present circumstances, politically, all of us are being held captive to serve their political ends; used simply as fodder in their never-ending battle with the opposition. They both seem to be only for themselves. Their only real objective is to defeat their ideological nemesis. We, Americans more generally, are being pretty much ignored. Politics, rather than a means to an end, has for them become an end in itself. Think about it."

"How so?"

"Well, no matter which one we elect, all they do is fight with one another about what to do and how to do it. The result is little or nothing of substance gets accomplished. They both are so busy pursuing political ends that governing for most of the people at least most of the time doesn't happen. All we detect in Washington is motion imitating action.

Some call us Independents, others Centrists. Okay, it doesn't really matter what we're called. The point is that we—today a plurality of voters—have no practical choice in our political arena other than the duopoly we continue to indicate is unacceptable. Come time to vote, that's it. We're dealt the same old unchanging political hand come every election. Of what value is the ballot box, you might reasonably ask, if the vote, in effect, represents a Morton's fork, a dismal choice between two unattractive options (Would you prefer to be dispatched by hanging or decapitation?). Today, no matter which one we might opt for we can expect the same result: unacceptable government performance."

"Well, what are you looking for? More bipartisanship, or what?"

"No, bipartisanship is a myth. It won't happen. Absent moderation, ideologically it can't. And neither Party, or at least its leadership, is what today, by any stretch of the imagination, you would call "moderate." What we would like is a political option crafted, or aimed, primarily with us in mind; towards us voters who have already indicated we want (the Country needs) greater choice come election time."

"And what might that look like, if I might ask?"

"Of course. For starters, like an option that promotes government that isn't primarily based on ideology. A political choice that emphasizes the greatest good for the greatest number; one that at least offers the promise to govern in the interests

Boom! A Revolting Situation

of all of the people at least most of the time, and most of the people all of the time. For the existing (ideological) Parties, this is not possible; it's questionably even their intent."

"And you really believe something along such a utopian philosophy is possible, politically, here in America?"

"We don't think it's either utopian or believe it's impossible, given the continuing loss of support for the two Parties. Face it: As agents for change, we represent an elephant in the room—a huge elephant—and it's time we're recognized for what we are. We would certainly like to see someone at least propose what we are suggesting for our consideration. Remember, on the numbers alone, we have the upper hand. All we lack is for a Moses to lead us out of this political captivity"

"Good luck with that one, ladies and gentlemen! Our guys will never let it happen."

"Okay, if the exodus underway isn't enough to make our point, then they will probably witness a revolution."

CHAPTER II

A Revolting Situation



“... they-will-probably-witness-a-revolution.”

Now, that’s a little scary. Like me, you probably never considered yourself a revolutionary, and would resist any such suggestion. After all, we’re peaceful law-abiding citizens. Amen! We proudly think of ourselves that way. In this connection, most of us are what I describe as political conscientious objectors, and you know, that’s exactly what our political leadership counts on us being: pretty servile, non-combative. Yes, we (most of us) do vote; some of us do go to political meetings and rallies but if you think about it, our options in all this are pretty limited. It seems to be an either or situation we face. And knuckling under, or grinning and bearing it, among those narrow options is about as radical as most of us get as we frustratingly express our political feelings and inclinations. Nevertheless, today that’s increasingly proving not to be enough, not if we’re serious about wanting better from government. Some have already begun to publically express dissatisfaction with what politics gives us today: Political Independents. If you really think about it, it’s a pretty revolting situation.

In an effort to try to assure that what we really do get from our political representatives, government considering the people—that’s all of the people, not just some of the people—I want you to reconsider your own political conscientious objector status; I want to exhort you to “get involved;” join a political revolution—in your own self-interest! That’s what it’s gonna take to

accomplish this. Actually (most of you probably didn't realize this), in a still rather subtle fashion, one is already underway, believe it or not! That's what we're really all about here: Introducing you to this developing revolution, and I urge you, nay, I exhort you, to take up this political struggle. By exhorting I mean exactly that: to encourage or provoke you to action, whatever it takes. That's the goal here, to convince you of this necessity: that your proper place is with your fellow political dissidents:

How can a situation like that be, in a liberal popular democracy like ours?

Consider this a manual, a "How-To" reference of what is needed to carry out the idea (take action) and goal (positive change) of a successful political revolution. A revolution is the overthrow of an established regime or political system by the people governed. It's most often a forcible one, and I picture the one proposed here would be, in its own way, forcible. It would have to be, because those being opposed are not about to fade away; they won't without a struggle cede political power to others.

Well, it is the case: Almost forty percent of America's voters aren't pleased, or satisfied, with their political options when going to the polls! That's a rather sad commentary on our democracy. Wouldn't you be tempted to say, given this situation, that these forty percent are effectively disenfranchised; that satisfactory representative democracy is being denied them?

The powers that be have developed an impressive array of defenses against just this possibility, and to date, have been successful. All recent attempts to defeat, compete with or even influence today's duopoly that controls our political system (and hence our governments) have proven in vain. Such efforts have been akin to multiple Joshuas circling walled cities blowing their horns, hoping for the walls to come tumbling down. It may have happened once, but successful attempts since then are unrecorded.

If not disenfranchised, aside from the few that opt to vote for today's third-parties, they are effectively coerced into voting for one of two alternative political representatives they have publically rejected for political affiliation. That sure seems a form of effective political captivity. You seldom hear it put this way, but that's the reality of the situation: As they say, a choice between two bad alternatives is hardly a choice at all ("Would you prefer to die by hanging, or by decapitation?").

Today's political elites have become overconfident and arrogant in their

belief that their positions are unassailable. That the only type of defense they have to put up is against each other in their never ending power-struggle for political control. The People—powerless in the misguided view of those who represent them—are simply taken for granted. History, they believe, has validated this view. Perhaps it has. Today, however, they are wrong in their continued confidence of an unassailable position. If truth be known, it grows weaker with each passing day. A revolution is underway. Look closely and you can actually see it amassing on the horizon. Just consider the trends of what the people think of them. Here’s a snapshot of Americans’ view of the two-party system today, in terms of how well it defines issues and provides choices for voters.

	Works fairly well	Has real problems	Is seriously broken	Unsure
2010	15%	52%	31%	2%
2007	20%	47%	29%	4%
1997	15%	55%	27%	3%
1995	15%	54%	28%	3%

NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll

Now, that sure looks like less than what most people would call confidence or popular support for the Parties themselves: Less than a quarter of those polled view the Parties as “working fairly well.” And look at the supporters of the Parties themselves, the followings they have as they compete with each other to run government:

	1968	1978	1988	1998	2008	2010
Republicans (Strong and weak)	25%	21%	28%	26%	26%	23%
Democrats (Strong and weak)	46%	39%	36%	37%	34%	33%
Independents (Leaners and others)	30%	40%	36%	37%	40%	36%
Others NEC	—	—	—	—	—	8%

Years 1968–2008, ANES table 5A–1. Year 2010, *NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll*

Neither Party enjoys a majority—never has: The Republicans’ support represent but a quarter of American voters, the Democrats at their highest in the past forty years only about 39% of votes. Clearly, both are minority-interest parties pretending to speak for the majority of Americans, or do they even make that claim? Just how long a political group can (or should) continue to go unchallenged given the expressed opinions of Americans on the above issues is a critical question. It’s a question neither of these two parties wants discussed. You can bet they aren’t going to bring it up, and you can also bet they aren’t going to make it easy for others to bring up. Given their defenses in place, they give little but lip-service to correcting what appears so clearly in need of correcting. The “game” goes on for them, secure in their systemic citadels.

Today the handle put on these forty or so percent of Independent voters is that they are “swing voters,” voters who simply can’t make up their mind who to vote for, giving their votes to whichever of the two parties has the most compelling campaign pitch to attract their attention.

But the time has come for correction, for positive change; it’s past due most would probably agree, and if it can only come by revolution, as seems to be the case, then this approach seems completely justified, morally, ethically and politically; a just revolution.

Electurally, Independents are considered important, worthy of consideration by the Parties, for exactly one day every election cycle! Neither party wants to own them, necessarily, just to rent them for that day; just enough to win the election. Once the race is over, these all-important “swinglers”, this plurality of America’s voters, has no place at the political table; no representation in any coalition implied by the candidates during the campaign; little or no further consideration by government. They are simply electorally used, politically abused.

It’s justified because the political status quo is loath to accept that the Republican/Democrat Duopoly which for so long has dominated our politics, has fallen out of favor—way out of favor—with so many Americans. The irony is that we do have a mechanism for correction here, but our electoral system itself hinders it. And as that system is for all intents and purposes under the control of the Duopoly, it’s very, very difficult to make any changes. Sounds circular here, doesn’t it.

Clearly, there is something wrong with this picture. Is this effective representative democracy? If so many of us can see the problem, why can't they? Oh, I think they can. The problem is we have an elephant in the room few if any in the political establishment dares to take seriously. But they see it! So change is called for; it can only be put-off for so long by those who stand to lose by it.

The revolution will be aggressive. But aggressive does not implicitly or explicitly imply violence. True, our political history has more than a few instances of such conflicts, but we have to believe (at least want to believe) we have by this time gone past such brutish inclinations.

There are continuing protests by both politicians and some academics that there really is no such thing as an Independent voter; that they are all, or at least mostly, just "closet" Democrats and Republicans, and they support such a claim by the fact that is how most of them vote, come election time. Now this claim seems to be a classic "Dah moment." Ask yourself one simple question in this connection: What practical choice do they have? And by practical choice means today's third-parties considered. To date, third-parties have not been contenders in American politics, with just a few—very few—exceptions. So the fiction of Independents is promoted; denial is the name of the game. Somehow they must be trying to convince themselves that if they just ignore this widely recognized elephant in the room, it, will go away! Or more probably, that it may not go away, but it won't somehow evolve, won't coalesce into what we might call a political bloc and therefore become more of a concrete threat to the status quo.

Make no mistake. The Duopoly, by its ideological strait-jackets, not only will not, but in all fairness to it cannot, compromise. It's a matter of principle, the players will say. So given their holding of the high ground—in the sense of its defensive electoral position, not of any moral qualities—a revolution is unavoidable. This electoral uprising will be the result of the long-term plurality of individual American voters being shown, and recognizing, that he/she—as a declared Independent voter—is not alone; that he/she is a potentially important cog in an effort to effect positive change; that his/her vote can help correct what so many perceive as in need of correcting: the results of government.

And so, duopolistic denial goes on; the fiction gets perpetuated. Reality recedes in the face of desperation. In a political system dominated by two parties, the

probability that there is a political influence rather larger than the two who are accustomed to being alone in the room is an unwelcome one, so far as they are concerned. Even for them, it's truly a revolting situation!

We cannot be challenged they reassure themselves, so just ignore it! This perceived opposition isn't real, only a fiction of our imagination. It's not really there. But, it is there; there really is a (threatening) elephant in the room. It is today huge, growing from about twenty-five percent of voters at mid-twentieth century to about forty percent today. The elephant continues to grow, demanding an ever greater effort to downplay and, more importantly, ignore its significance. Today, it's not possible to ignore its presence; not only because you can see it in the numbers, hear about it in the news and register its consequences in elections. Political Independents are everywhere; this is a nation-wide elephant! It will not forever be denied.

Still, go the accepted party lines, there really is no such thing as "political Independents." Oh, yes, there are voters who have not registered for either of our parties, but in reality, they are for the most part, one of us. "Closet" Democrats or Republicans, they are. Not to worry, come election time that's who they will vote for. They just need a little convincing, a little "political stroking" to side with "us." And in truth, historically this has been the case. But while both Parties downplay the significance and attempt to minimize Independents as a potential political influence today, more and more are probably coming to realize this is mostly self-delusion. Political pollsters know just how important their presence is to victory, or defeat, at the polls. In fact, today they will admit they decide elections. But even so, it's still questionable if many understand—or want to understand—the political significance of Independents in the early twenty-first century: the "why" of political Independents. What are they doing here?

Well, as these attempts at dramatics demonstrate, folks, we do have a problem; trouble, right here in "River City," and it amounts to more than just a new pool table in town. It's a revolting political situation facing us, like it or not, and most of us certainly don't like it. And akin to the irrepressible Professor Harold Hill, I'm here to sell you a solution to the problem, hopefully with motives somewhat less self-serving than that beguiling travelling musical instrument hawker from *The Music Man*.

As we push forward and build our case for the revolutionary nature and

significance of Independents, we'll take a close look at the political landscape, electoral panorama, public frustration, and galactic government itself to bring into focus the "what" and the "why" of political Independents. We will delve into some areas that are not necessarily "politically correct" and get into some issues that some would not like to have see the light of day; some many would say are divisive in our society today. Perhaps, but that doesn't make them any less an issue. And most have been around for some time now, in plain view to deal with.

These non-aligned voters have not just appeared overnight. Nor, it can be argued, have they simply bloomed for no reason. An obvious and easy answer is they are unhappy with the Democrats and Republicans. Okay, but why? Now, this may at first sound like a question straight out of TV's *"Are You Smarter Than a Fifth Grader?"* considering the political behavior we are subjected to, as I write this, surrounding the federal debt limit debate. Exposure over time to this kind of partisan principle-over-pragmatism theology (dogma) no doubt is part of the answer, probably a big part of it, but there is a further and broader rationale for their presence (some of which we have already hinted at) and that rationale will demonstrate their significance (some of which we have already suggested as well). There is historical context and meaning explaining the swelling presence of Independents, as well as suggesting their significance. Today, Independents truly are a nationwide hard to ignore elephant in our political arena. But they also retain a certain ambivalence and certainly don't recognize their own collective significance. And, that's just fine with the Duopoly!

For the moment, I suggest five features, or aspects, of political Independents: what they represent. We'll pursue, examine in depth, and demonstrate the reality of each of these descriptions before we're through here.

- Independents are evidence of dissatisfaction with the results of ideological government.
- Independents are evidence of an inadequate political marketplace.
- Independents are a proxy for the moderate–middle–majority of voters.

Boom! A Revolting Situation

- Independents represent agents for political change.
- Independents themselves are a probable cause of extreme partisanship.

This should start us thinking about the significance of Independents—their presence today is not in doubt. If these representations of Independents can be demonstrated, as we will, then their significance becomes all too readily apparent: the need for positive change (which I will define) in our political—but not necessarily in our electoral—environment. It should make this call for revolution ring loud and clear!

To develop and ground our argument that today’s political duopoly represents a revolting situation we have to consider a bit its historical context and setting; of the political landscape, social and economic development and electoral panorama leading to the fertile fields of discontent in which this (Independent) elephant was conceived, has grown, and by today, clearly national. We’ll have to go “outside the box” and at the start a bit afield from the current focus here to make our case. But in the end, I’ll be surprised if you don’t find it a compelling one. A revolutionary compelling one!

Boom!