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Gerson on the Tea Party

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 25, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

For months now, I have been warning the GOP that the extremists in the ranks of the Tea Party threaten the long-term viability of the Republican Party, not the Democratic Party, because ultimately, the American people are not primarily ideological, they want problem-solvers in office, and whatever they think of the Democrats, nobody likes voting for a candidate who can be described as ?kookie.?

Well, the same warning comes today from Michael Gerson [1], who was a speech-writer for President George W. Bush. Gerson looks at the limits of strict constitutionalism, the danger of a renewed nativism, and willingness to wink at martial metaphors (?it is toxic for the GOP to be associated with the armed and the juvenile?), and sees trouble for the GOP if this is the face they present to the electorate in November.

Gerson is right and I hope the GOP listens. There is a need for a constructive, responsible Republican Party. If there were a solid dozen, rather than two or three, Republican Senators willing to sit down with the President on any given issue, then we might see the GOP affect policy. If, for example, Sen. Snowe had entered into negotiations on health care, not with a view of defeating any and all proposals, but in moving those proposals in a more conservative direction, and she had a dozen GOP votes with her, maybe the health care proposal would have been implemented on a state-by-state basis for example, with the feds putting up the money but the states being given wide latitude to achieve universal coverage within a specific time. It is just an example, but you get the idea.

America always needs two vibrant parties, and that vibrancy must be, in part, an intellectual vibrancy. Gerson is one of the real thinkers in the GOP. The rest of his party should listen to him.

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[1] http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/08/24/AR2010082405001.html