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Republican Perspective

By Christopher Panton

Is There Life After Ronnie? Part I

In my first column for the Republican Perspective, I drew a parallel between what happened during Britain's decline (roughly 1945 to 1979) and what is happening in the United States today. Over the last 18 months or so, I beta tested this concept on some American friends and colleagues - without convincing any single one of them. In my first column, I did not divulge this less-than-stellar sales performance as I wanted to present the concept in a virginal, unsullied light. A small, but forgivable, deceit.

However, it gets worse. Earlier, I said that I had no credentials to write this column. That was a deliberate under-statement. What I kept from you is that, at heart, I am nothing more than a mere simpleton. I look for simplicity in life's tangles. (This second "small deceit" proves that I am developing the necessary tools to be a stunning politician.) A famous person once said, "For every complex problem there is a simple answer. And it's wrong." Maybe. But I would strenuously argue that my simple answers are miles closer to being right than most complex answers to complex problems. As an example, take Obamacare. PLEASE!!

I promised readers that I would suggest what Republicans can do to reverse the United States tide of creeping socialism that history dictates will lead to eventual decay at worst, or permanent ineffective mediocrity at best. I'll bait the hook with a short, summary answer: Margaret Thatcher. However, later on, I will admit to a little cheating on that, too. (Wow, signs of yet another destiny-politician talent. At this rate, I'll soon be able to run for president! On the Democrat ticket, of course.)

I now need to add a soupcon of additional background before embellishing my two word answer. In my simple-minded world, there are only two ways to begin to address problems and issues. First, establish the what (the objective); what are we going to do? Although this exercise may be tough - especially as the sting in the tail is always to ask why - its difficulty pales before that of the next step, which is the how (the strategy). How are we going to do it? In a group, this step is often the hardest by far upon which to gain consensus. Finding a Margaret Thatcher is therefore the what, and now we must ask why? So, let's talk about her.

In the mid-1970s, I worked for a Big Oil (Houston) think tank. My colleagues - bright, intellectually curious - routinely pestered me about conditions in Britain. Where was rock-bottom and what did it look like? I made no favorable impression by claiming not to know. But I don't think anyone did. Already frequently identified as the "sick man of Europe," Britain was in a high unemployment tail-spin recession, accompanied by raging inflation. Against this back-drop, Thatcher became prime minister in 1979, the first woman to do so. She served for the longest period of any 20th century British prime minister.

Her career up to and beyond that point is capably summarized on Wikipedia. Browse it and you will find that she was no goddess. She made mistakes and she made enemies. But, on the plus side, she was a straight shooter and hard bargainer; a person of almost frightening conviction and integrity. These traits were fundamental to her how. Like her counterpart in the United States, the incomparable Ronald Reagan, she had just a few vital objectives (whats) and she pursued them mercilessly. President Reagan's how methods may have been quite different from Thatcher's, but as politicians, they shared much common ground.

Like Reagan, she stood up to the Cold War Russians by re-arming Britain with a modern nuclear capability at significant cost. Perturbed, but obviously not panicked, the Russians responded with insult. They called her "the Iron Lady," a phrase that she proudly seized upon and often used as her own personal soubriquet.

I mentioned earlier that I cheated a bit in suggesting a Margaret-Thatcher-type (man or woman) to pull this country from the morass that it seems to be hell-bent on creating. Since I've out-stayed my welcome via the length of this article, then I'll reveal the cheat in the next chapter. Coming soon. Hopefully.

Chris Panton can be emailed at Chrismargeret@sbcglobal.net.