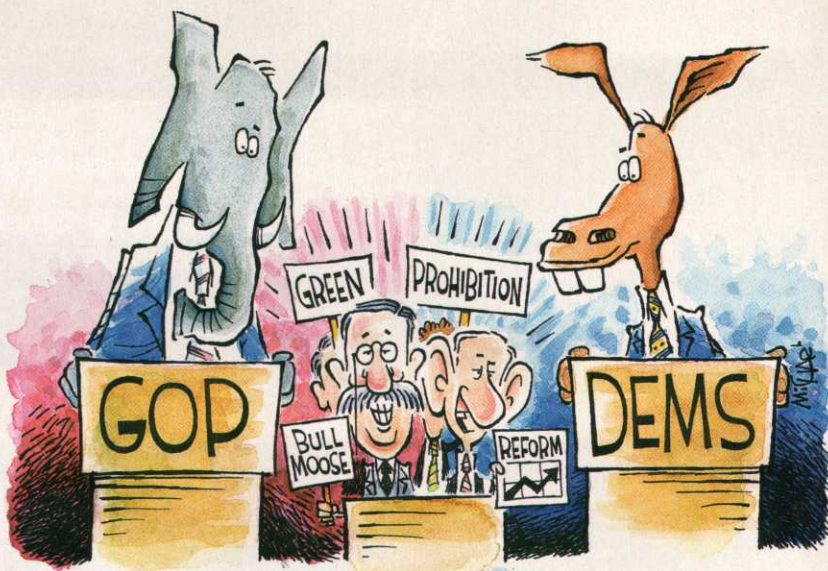


third parties



Henry Clay once said, "I would rather be right than president." Well, he must have been right often — poor Mr. Clay thrice ran for the nation's top office and never won.

Now, most folks will tell you there are but two choices in an election. The overblown rhetoric of both major political parties tells us the same — that the other side is evil, and voting for the opponent will carry our land directly into hell's handbasket.

One of the rather quaint (and disheartening) aspects of American politics has been the rise and inevitable fall of third parties in the presidential process. Without fail, it seems, third-party candidates garner more jeers than cheers, even when the two big boys try to co-opt their issues. They represent the best and worst of America, folks with visions (sometimes wacky) who care enough to get on ballots and give speeches despite knowing their cause is virtually guaranteed to get blasted out of the water come election day. With that in mind, let's recognize some of them (warts and all):

The Know-Nothings — Although a more apt name for either of the major parties today, the Know-Nothings were one of our first highly reactionary parties. They didn't like all the immigration occurring in the 1850s, they wanted Bible study in

FED UP WITH REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS?

CHECK OUT WHAT'S BEHIND DOOR NO. 3 BY MARK LUCE

grade schools and they railed against alcohol, which they claimed those nasty immigrants enjoyed. The name came from their penchant for secret meetings. When asked about them, their members would answer, a la Sgt. Schultz, "I know nothing." Obviously, voters concurred.

Bull Moose (Progressive) — Teddy Roosevelt scoffed at those who said he wasn't fit for office in 1912 after taking it on the chin from his protégé, William Taft, in the Republican primary. With the mantra, "I am as fit as a Bull Moose," Roosevelt ran for President on a platform of government reform that championed citizens. He only succeeded in splitting the Republican vote, thus making Woodrow Wilson president. For the record, Roosevelt did outdraw Taft, 27 percent to 23 percent.

Reform Party — Even though it didn't technically form until after Ross Perot's chart-filled, "economy's like an engine, see?" run in 1992, the Reform party managed not only to get votes and attention but also federal funding after

Perot's strong showing. The party devolved into bickering and lame candidates. Its primary success was making budget deficits a major issue in the 1992 and 1996 elections, and it can probably take some measure of credit for making Bill Clinton and Congress actually address the issue during the 1990s.

Prohibition Party — Yes, this party still exists, and it wants to outlaw booze, not to mention gambling, pornography and "commercialized vice."

Personal Liberty Party — Members of the Prohibition Party aren't fans of this new party, which is a splinter from the more well-known Libertarians. It wants to legalize gambling and, my intellect tells me, leave commercialized vice alone.

So hail the third parties and their quirks. And here's hoping that this election — Editor's note: *Golfdom* went to print in late October — went more smoothly than the last one.

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