



Friedman calls for a Third Party

Posted by [Stuart Staniford](#) on May 2, 2006 - 11:52pm

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We weren't the only ones completely disgusted with the recent political grandstanding over high gasoline prices. Tom Friedman is now calling for a third party, to replace the useless ones we have now, and specifically to deal with energy challenges. It's [behind the NY Times paywall](#), alas, but here's some snippets:

Seriously, there is something really disturbing about the utterly shameless, utterly over-the-top Republican pandering and Democratic point-scoring that have been masquerading as governing in response to this energy crisis. The Republicans are worse, because they control all the levers of power and could move the country if they proposed a serious energy policy -- but won't.

"We used to say the system is broken because it won't respond until there is a crisis," said David Rothkopf, author of "Running the World," a history of U.S. foreign policy. But now it's really broken, "because the system can't even respond to a crisis!"

What to do? I'm hoping for a third party. The situation is ripe for one: America is facing a challenge as big as the cold war -- how we satisfy our long-term energy needs, at reasonable prices, while decreasing our dependence on oil and the bad governments that export it -- and neither major party will offer a solution, because it requires sacrifice today for gain tomorrow.

"There is an opportunity here for someone who will seize it," said Micah Sifry, author of "Spoiling for a Fight: Third-Party Politics in America." That someone would have to be a more emotionally stable and energy-focused Ross Perot type. Because, added Mr. Sifry, "if the issue of the day in 1991-1992 was the ballooning budget deficit that we were not dealing with, then the issue today we are not dealing with is the energy and environmental catastrophe that awaits the next generation. It is as much a mortgaging of our children's future as the deficit issue. It needs the right leader, though."

Like someone who will tell the truth: The only way Americans are ever going to enjoy relatively cheap gasoline again is if we raise the price now with a gasoline tax-- and fix it at that higher level for several years -- so investors know that it is not coming down, and therefore it makes economic sense for them to make the long-term investments in alternative, renewable sources of energy. That is the only way to break our oil addiction

and ultimately bring down the price.

Yes, our system is rigged against third parties. Still, my gut says that some politician, someday soon, just to be different, just for the fun of it, will take a flier on telling Americans the truth. The right candidate with the right message on energy might be able to drive a bus right up the middle of the U.S. political scene today -- lose the far left and the far right -- and still maybe, just maybe, win a three-way election.

Sounds like a better plan than we have now. Who should we draft?



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