

Neither Thune nor Cornyn for Senate GOP Leader



Senators Barrasso, Thune (back) McConnell and Cornyn

by Roger L. Simon

One of the most serious contradictions for the Republican Party these days is the immense—one could even say yawning—gap between the party's rank-and-file and much of its old guard leadership.

The old guard clings desperately to what might be called a business-as-usual, Uniparty approach, while the party rank-and-file is predominantly, even vastly, pro-Donald Trump/MAGA.

We are finding that reflected in the battle to succeed Sen. Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), who recently announced his resignation as Senate minority leader.

As of now, only Senate Minority Whip John Thune (R-S.D.), a man many consider “McConnell lite,” and Sen. John Cornyn (R-Texas), who previously held the post that Mr. Thune occupies, have publicly entered the fray.

With minor variations, both men are resolute members of the old guard, the kind that would perforce, due to the superficialities of party loyalty, support President Trump, if nominated, in November, but would do so in a manner signaling a certain distance, even subtle disdain.

We can see this in Mr. Thune’s interchange with local media KELO, as the liberal [Politico](#) reported:

“The veteran South Dakota legislator declined to directly answer whether former President Donald Trump’s refusal to accept his loss in the 2020 presidential election gave Thune pause before he endorsed the presumptive GOP nominee this cycle.

“‘I’ve said what I’ve said—and I’m not going to re-litigate it,’ Thune [said](#). ‘The important thing now is ... that we move forward in a way that hopefully gets this country back on track.’

“Asked about his decision to endorse Trump, Thune [said](#): ‘I let the process play out. ... At this point now, it’s really down to Biden and Trump. And that, to me, is a very clear choice.’”

Compare the above with the full-throated endorsement of President Trump you get from Mr. Thune’s fellow South Dakotan Gov. Kristi Noem.

All kinds of scenarios could play out depending on whether President Trump wins back the presidency and whether the GOP wins back the Senate, but with either of those two men at the helm, it is unlikely that the results will redound well for progress or change.

If you’re looking to put an end to the deep state, do not look to these men who have been its acquiescing participants for

decades. They are part of the problem, not the solution.

The Senate—reputedly the “world’s greatest deliberative body”—lags far behind its constituents—aka We the People—in its desire for that change. Rather than that “deliberative” body, it is a “protective” body—of its perquisites, power, and, in many cases, wealth.

It has become instead the world’s capital of talking the talk without walking the walk. The voting records of a number of GOP senators quite frequently do not comport with what they say in public.

Money, the all too obvious mother’s milk of politics, dictates too many of their actions when the surface is scratched and often when it’s not.

Apropos, a new report from the [Daily Caller News Foundation](#) tells us that “Republican South Dakota Sen. John Thune is asking for over \$116 million in earmarks for a spending package to avoid a government shutdown, according to the Senate minority whip’s office.”

Is that the kind of politics as usual bilge we will get from Mr. Thune’s leadership in the future?

New leaders, not the same old same old, are needed.

But who are they? In the Senate, the list is short, and those same institutional perquisites, masked as revered traditions, already permeate the discussion. Already we are hearing talk, notably from Mr. Cornyn, of the necessity for a “centrist” (him) to “bring together” the warring sides.

The center of what, one might ask? Is this simply a rationalization for compromises that almost always tilt in the direction of the Democrats, as in the recent (thankfully aborted) border agreement negotiated by Sen. James Lankford (R-Okla.) with the support of then-Leader McConnell that amounted, on inspection, to institutionalizing the open border?

It would be refreshing if the Senate Republicans had a leader who actually led in the sense of bringing us forward into the unknown and highly technological future while bringing us back, actually anchoring us to, the founding ideas of our republic.

It sounds complicated, but it's really not all that daunting for a person with the requisite values and intelligence to handle that technological future.

Unfortunately, such people are rare in our political world.

Interestingly, an article in [The Epoch Times](#) on March 5 informs us that "RFK Jr. Backs Rand Paul as Senate Minority Leader as VP Speculation Mounts." The latter part refers to Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.) running with Robert Kennedy Jr. on a libertarian ticket, but Mr. Kennedy, an obvious cross-party fan of Mr. Paul, recommends the Kentucky senator for GOP senate leader (minority or majority, as that proves to be). Whether you like both, one, or neither of these men, it's safe to say they have more creative minds and are thinking more of the future than the run of politicians.

No one knows what is going to happen in this roller coaster year, but one thing should be clear: The U.S. Senate on the Republican side, and even more on the Democrat side, needs a serious infusion of creative imagination.

GOP senators would do well to keep that—and of course the rank-and-file, for a change—in mind when selecting their new leader.

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