

# Bankrupting the Conventional Wisdom

by Bill Herbst

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According to the conventional political wisdom, the Republican National Convention, held this past week (July 18th-21st) in Cleveland, was a disaster.

Starting with the bludgeoning of the anti-Trump forces on Day 1, and continuing through the obvious plagiarism of Michelle Obama's words in Trump's wife Melania's speech on the second night, then culminating in Ted Cruz' refusal to endorse Donald Trump in his presentation on Night 3, media commentators — including nearly all those from the center to the left side of the political spectrum, but even many on the right as well — have pointed out, discussed at length, and roundly condemned the incompetence of Donald Trump's campaign staff. The criticisms have been accompanied often by expressions of shock and disbelief. The attitude that resounds in the media is not merely surprise that such crude mistakes were made at the convention by Trump's campaign staff, but downright bewilderment at how these kinds of mistakes could have been allowed to happen by supposedly professional political managers in an election campaign for the highest office in the land.

*Here's the rub, however: A very good chance exists that none of those gaffes will matter one whit in terms of the election-to-come in November.*

The case can be made — and I'm making it here — that the conventional wisdom in American politics, and indeed, in American life as a whole, has taken an extraordinary nosedive into irrelevance. We are living in Brave New World, with all the uncertainties, shocks, and unexpected developments that implies.

As has been pointed out numerous times by various commentators, this year bears an eerie resemblance to 1968, with its unpredictability, shocks, violence, and a deeply divided American public. Beyond that general correspondence, the years 1968-1969 witnessed the most dramatic expressions of the Uranus-Pluto cycle that began during the 1960s.

The decade of the 2010s is the next phase of that radical, revolutionary cycle — the first-quarter transition into the "summer" phase of what began as "spring" in the 1960s. I've written about the astrology of this at some length, so I won't repeat it at any length here. A compact reiteration is that many social

developments that were birthed in the 1960s but then went underground in subsequent decades are now arising again, sometimes with a vengeance.

By the mid-1970s and certainly by the 1980s, it appeared that various “social experiments” of the 1960s had been either beaten back or overwhelmed by more standard and conservative structures. To cite just a few examples, organic farming seemed to have lost out to agri-business, natural medicine was apparently the loser to the high-tech and pharmaceutical approaches of allopathic Western medicine, and the civil rights movement that culminated in the Civil Rights Act of 1965 was undone by a new “Jim Crow” subtext, including economic marginalization and “drug wars” that put a significant percentage of entire generations of black men behind bars.

The astrology of the Uranus-Pluto cycle clearly suggested that these and other “winners” of cultural backlash would not simply walk away with the prizes forever. Astrological cycle theory predicted that the 2010s would see an upwelling of grassroots rebellions against that very status quo.

In a general way, this conflict comes down to class war between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” The divide between those who benefit through privilege and profit from the ways American culture is organized and run, on the one hand, and those who feel left out or disenfranchised on the other has never been more extreme. Even the “Robber Baron” epoch of the 1870s-1880s pales in comparison to the severe disparity we now see in America between the 1% who determine social policy and control most of the wealth and the 99% that comprises “the rest of us.” I don’t blame any particular group for this state of affairs. We are all responsible for allowing it to happen, and — if astrology offers any solace — the fact that it happened over the past 40 years was, if not inevitable, at least predictable.

The debate about the questionable wisdom of the market economy we have now, with its emphasis on financial speculation, over-consumption through the headlong pursuit of short-term profits, and wealth accumulation at any cost, can be argued at great length, and from either camp — those who love what America has become and those who don’t. My intent in this commentary is not to engage in that heated discussion, but merely to point out that millions of Americans on both sides of the left-right political spectrum are rising up to protest the status quo of the way things are.

One of the hallmarks of the existing order can be seen through the conduct of our national political life. While the left-right political divide is as potent and conflicted as ever, what unifies a large segment of the American public in this decade is the desire to “throw the bums out.” The conventional wisdom of politics — now well-established in the two major political parties, most of our elected representatives on both sides of the aisle, and the entire machinery of

professional politicians that support them and run the machinery — is under assault.

The stunning success of Donald Trump's candidacy in the Republican camp and the relative success of Bernie Sanders' run for president among the Democrats, which has been no less impressive despite Sanders' failure to gain the nomination, give ample testimony to how fed up many Americans are with the ways our society is organized and conducted.

When I watched the Republican Convention on TV this past week and heard so many pundits, commentators, and television anchors echo the opinion that the Convention was a disaster, I could not help but feel that those people — all of them, regardless of their political leanings — were part of the existing status quo and the privileged classes that are now being challenged. Of course those commentators, pundits, and operatives decried the lack of a smoothly-run, slick convention. They are all part of the established order that oversaw the transformation over the past 70 years of political conventions into highly scripted, tightly controlled theater of "infotainment."

I don't pretend to know the outcome of the coming election, nor exactly what will happen in the years ahead, whichever of the two nominees — either Hillary or Trump — manages to attain the White House. The wild-card factors are too great to allow any reasonable prediction about the results. What I am certain of, however, is that the opinions of well-paid commentators and pundits are, if not completely irrelevant, at least largely suspect. Their opinions may not count for much in this extraordinary time of disruption and change.

Will the Convention gaffes hurt Donald Trump's chances over the three months of this campaign and the election that follows? Maybe, but maybe not. Trump hasn't been harmed by the many "mistakes" he's made during the primary, and whatever further errors are made from here on out may not matter, either.

In terms of political realities, the only thing that matters is how Americans vote in the November election, and no one can predict with any certainty this year how that will go.

As Dorothy said to her little dog when they first set down in Oz after the tornado lifted up their farmhouse and took them to another dimension, *"I don't think we're in Kansas anymore, Toto."*