

Bill Kristol's Preposterous Proposal

One of the Washington elite's great conceits is that anyone can be president—when what they really mean is that *anyone like them* can be president.

This applies to professional political class Democrats and Republicans alike, but it is an opinion sadly over-represented among establishment “conservatives” associated with many of the longtime opinion-leading right-of-center Inside-the-Beltway institutions.

Its latest, and most damaging manifestation is the preposterous notion, promoted by Bill Kristol and the #NeverTrump cabal, that *National Review* writer and constitutional lawyer David French is a viable candidate for president.

Mr. French is a veteran of Operation Iraqi Freedom, a recipient of the Bronze Star, and an author of several books who, by all accounts, lives a life of quiet rectitude in Columbia, Tennessee, with his wife, Nancy, and three children.

On paper Mr. French looks like a great candidate to represent Tennessee in the U.S. Senate or Congress.

Goodness knows that, sight unseen, he would be vastly superior to Senator Lamar Alexander or the near-treasonous Senator Bob Corker, author of the Iran Nuclear Deal legislation.

But Bill Kristol isn't talking about placing Mr. French somewhere where he could actually advance the cause of governing America according to conservative principles, he's looking for him to be the allegedly conservative spoiler in the battle between Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump.

Kristol, a veteran of the White House and a variety of political campaigns, must on some level recognize that his gambit to promote David French for president bears a striking resemblance to the old Little Rascals series episode where the Gang, dejectedly sitting around their club house suddenly brighten when Spanky says, "Hey everyone, let's put on a circus!" Soon Alfalfa is the lion tamer, Darla is his beautiful assistant and their faithful dog Pete is dressed up like a lion. The only question here is what role poor Mr. French will play.

It's all a big joke for the Little Rascals, not so much for the adults who are always trying to spoil the Little Rascals' fun.

Why are Kristol and the #NeverTrump cabal engaged in this comic opera exercise?

One reason might be to salve their consciences for not getting in the race from the start and unreservedly supporting principled limited-government, constitutional conservative Ted Cruz in the early primaries, when that support might have blunted Donald Trump's populist surge.

Another reason might be to make themselves relevant.

As CHQ Chairman Richard Viguerie observed in his recent column Conservatives Should Embrace the Creative Disruption in Today's Politics, "Conservative principles—our products, if you will—are timeless, but some of our brands and marketing have gotten stale."

It is obvious to any unbiased observer of today's political scene that the inside-the-Beltway conservative establishment is in serious need of self-reflection. Rather than engage in a serious examination of how they became so disconnected from such a significant percentage of country class America, creating a spoiler campaign allows them to remain relevant, without admitting their negative role in stoking the populist

anger powering the Trump movement.

Finally, there is a less pleasant alternative, and that is that the dead enders of the #NeverTrump cabal who are promoting the preposterous idea of a David French candidacy wish to filter out of the national political scene anyone on the Right who is not like them.

Donald Trump's populist, often bombastic and occasionally profane rhetoric doesn't really fit in with the high-minded exchanges of the inheritors of William F. Buckley's urbane intellectual conservatism, expressed so brilliantly in *God and Man at Yale*.

Likewise, Trump's populist supporters, who harbor white-hot fury at the betrayals of the Republican establishment and the neglect of the inside-the-Beltway conservative elite, don't look like they fit in with the tweed sweater-vest set at the latest University Club seminar on the fine nuances between the economics of Hayek and von Mises.

Mr. French's colleague at *National Review*, Kevin D. Williamson, spoke for this darker reason when he wrote that white workers who have lost their jobs and had their quality of life devastated by 30 years of liberal folly and establishment Republican cronyism with Big Business are *immoral* for wanting a government that will actually serve the interests of its citizens.

To Williamson and his editors at *National Review*, Trump's supporters look way too much like the Carhart-clad masses who filled Sarah Palin rallies in 2008 and brought the McCain-Palin ticket even with Obama, until Senator McCain's team of rented strangers threw it all away on the Wall Street bailout.

David French may be a fine gentleman, he may be a man of many talents; an excellent constitutional lawyer and writer, but conservatives already ran a candidate with better intellectual and political credentials than his in Ted Cruz, and Donald

Trump ended up with the delegates necessary to win the Republican nomination for president.

The claim that, five months from Election Day, David French is a serious and relevant candidate for president in a year when the Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump campaigns will spend over \$2 billion on the election is a joke, and not an amusing one when the future of constitutional liberty hangs in the balance.

Mr. French can, at best, be an embarrassment to the cause of governing America according to conservative principles, and at worst be a spoiler. Conservatives should recognize Bill Kristol's effort for the not-so-funny joke that it is, and reject it and its arrogant proponents out of hand. {eo}

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