



Media Gatekeepers Limit Debate

So I guess the others who've been out there campaigning all these weeks and months should just fold their tents and go home. Say good night, Newt. Get along, Gary. Bye Bye, Bachmann. So long, Santorum. Take a hike, Huntsman. Can it, Cain. That's all, Paul.

The AP story was about the latest Hamlet on the hustings, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, and how he might jump into the presidential waters, after all, and what a big splash that would make. Of course, Christie has said about 10,000 times that he won't be a candidate and has even said the only thing he could do to make it more clear and emphatic that he is not going to run is to commit suicide, a thought that may have been pleasing to some of his enemies in the New Jersey legislature. But lately he has been having second thought and is reconsidering his [Shermanesque](#) stand. Or at least that's what the professional readers of the political tea leaves have been telling us.



But while the article is focused on Christie and how his entry would "reshape" the race, it does mention Michele Bachmann, in addition to Romney and Perry. It also mentions non-candidates and Governors Mitch Daniels of Indiana and Haley Barbour of Mississippi, and erstwhile candidate John McCain. Republican strategist Rich Galen is quoted, as are Kevin Madden and Dave Carney, hired guns for Romney and Perry, respectively. Even Mike Dennehy, political director for the shipwreck in the desert that was the 2008 McCain campaign, makes a cameo appearance. Henry Kissinger, Nancy Reagan, and Barbara Bush are, like the ingredients in Grandma's spaghetti sauce, all "in there." There is, of course, no mention of Ron Paul. The "mainstream" media have a strong sense of loyalty to the candidates and priorities of the political establishments of both major parties. They are defenders of the status quo.

Their presumption is at times breathtaking. In 2003, when the Democrats had a slate of candidates competing for the opportunity to run against George W. Bush, they gathered one evening in early December at the University of New Hampshire in Durham for a nationally televised debate. Ted Koppel of *Nightline* fame was the moderator. At one point Koppel turned to long-shot candidate Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and, after quoting some numbers indicating humble poll rankings and modest fundraising success by Mr. Kucinich, asked the candidate, "So when do you drop out?"

That was, mind you, several weeks before the first votes were cast in Iowa or New Hampshire. But the campaigns had their schedules and Koppel had his, and he decided it was high time to begin suggesting to candidates that they consider dropping out. The princes of the airwaves cannot, after all, allow the



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on October 3, 2011

great unwashed masses of ignorant voters to eliminate candidates in our own good time. Why, that would be electoral anarchy and nearly as silly as the notion that Congress should decide whether and when we should go to war. So when would Kucinich drop out? “When I take the oath of office on Inauguration Day, and you’ll be there, Ted,” was the candidate’s clever reply. Clever, but, alas, not prophetic.

So did that prove Koppel prescient? Hardly. So many of his questions to other candidates carried either the explicit or implicit assumption that Vermont Governor Howard Dean, then riding high in the polls, was the inevitable nominee that John Kerry came as close as the rules of civility and the FCC would permit to telling the smug, smirking Koppel just where he could shove his smug, smirking assumptions. And it was Kerry who won the nomination, before the tides and the winds turned against the political windsurfer from the Bay State.

When they are not trying to shrink the field of candidates, the media hotshots rather effectively narrow the range of issues to be discussed. Last week, ABC published in its political blog, “The Note,” an article entitled, [“Is the Ron Paul Campaign Stuck in Second Gear?”](#) That may be a sign of progress. Until quite recently, ABC and the rest of the major media had been reluctant to acknowledge that the Paul campaign *had* any gears — or that Paul had a campaign. “A good portion of Paul’s libertarian views, including abolishing the income tax, returning to the gold standard and eliminating the United Nations, are considered impractical by the Republican Party,” the blog noted. Perhaps so. But then the Republican Party has for decades found a great many things impractical, including its promises to balance the budget, reduce the size of government (starting with the promised elimination of the Departments of Education and Energy), and promote peace and prosperity. “And his views on eliminating the war on drugs and state regulation of abortions are considered out of the question.” Really?

Perhaps ABC has failed to notice the growing number of state and federal judges who have in recent years spoken out against the futility of the drug wars. Law Enforcement Against Prohibition (LEAP), an organization opposing the drug prohibition, was founded by five police officers in 2002 and has since drawn thousands of members, including parole, probation and corrections officers, judges, prosecutors, prison wardens, and FBI and DEA agents. And roughly half the population believes the Supreme Court’s invention of a constitutional “right” to abortion on demand is dead wrong.

Latecomer to the race Rick Perry has been trying to get traction with sharp criticisms of Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke and by calling on the Federal Reserve to “open their books.” Michele Bachmann has begun to take aim at “the Fed” as well. But Ron Paul has “owned” that issue for years, and it resonates with a lot of people — though ABC News might not have noticed Paul’s *End the Fed* or any of his other books that have been on the *New York Times* bestseller lists in the last few years.

But really, how much time does the subject of the Federal Reserve get in the televised debates? It’s not the fault of the media organizations that put on those shows. With all due respect — and they’re not due much — it’s doubtful that more than a few of the gatekeepers of acceptable opinion among the talking heads in the “inane stream” media are even capable of asking an intelligent question about the Federal Reserve.



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