

E. J. Dionne Jr.

Leaky Diary

The following was handed to me by a source called Deep Wave. It purports to be a fragment from House Speaker Newt Gingrich's diary. I cannot vouch for its authenticity, but do believe it accurately reflects his thinking.

Dear Diary,

So they all think I'm running for president. The journalists love it because they know that Dole, Gramm and the rest will put them to sleep. I know the real bias of the press isn't liberal (though I love to say so). What the press wants is an interesting fight, which I am extraordinarily well-equipped to give them. And a lot of Republicans—Jack Kemp, Bill Bennett, C-SPAN viewers—think I should run because this is a weak field.

Well, of course, I'd be an extraordinarily better candidate than these guys. I mean, they are by *orders of magnitude* below the level of understanding or strategy we need to beat Clinton. I'm a revolutionary, they're reactionaries. I guess I couldn't use that line in the pri-

wings of the party. The left helps me all the time by saying I'm so mean. If some of these right-wingers believe I'm mean, they'll let me say anything I need to say to win. It worked for Nixon, didn't it? I can praise old FDR as much as I want; the right figures I don't really mean it.

By the fall, people will be sick to death of these other Republicans. Dole and Gramm will have torn each other to pieces. The moderate Republicans will kill Dole on the tax cut. In the meantime, I can get the House Republicans to do anything I say. I'll be politely waiting for the Senate and making nice noises about how poor Bob Dole has a tough time over there. Pity is the best way to undercut somebody's claim to leadership. Then I jump in as the savior.

The reporters like that scenario, but the reporters have never understood that I'm playing an extraordinarily long game. My best scenario is to have Dole get the nomination, *not* get Colin Powell as a running mate, and have Clinton beat him narrowly. If the election is close enough, we can keep the House and I'll still be Speaker. With Clinton in the

maries, but it's true. Dole, no matter what he says, is still the tax collector for the welfare state, and his speeches sound as if they were written by a clerk of the Senate asked to describe tomorrow's legislative day.

And Phil Gramm? If Gramm were a Democrat, what I could do with that story about the soft porn film investment! I mean, it's "Woody Allen values" over again. Or how about: "Normal Americans don't invest in porn." Phil's okay on economics—he really believes the free market stuff, even for dirty movies. But the values crowd doesn't trust him. It's extraordinarily stupid that Phil of all people has to go even further right just to reassure these folks. Am I the only Republican who knows that you can savage bureaucrats, call for school prayer and praise FDR, Martin Luther King Jr. and tolerance at the same time? When they call you inconsistent, your friends say you're complex, deep, visionary. (Well, I am a transformational figure, right?)

This field is so extraordinarily weak that Pat Buchanan is going to surprise

White House, we'd gain big-time in the 1998 midterms. Newt for the New Millennium! And as somebody told me recently, the best thing for me would be a weak Democratic president—Clinton as Franklin Pierce or James Buchanan. Then the country would be ready for all the big changes I have in mind. Remember, after Pierce and Buchanan came Lincoln.

Besides, if I ran this time, think of all the remarkably grotesque stories the press would cook up. They'd love to tear me down the way they tried to tear down Clinton. (Standing up to the press in '92 is the one thing I respect about Clinton.) But if I wait four years, the country will get accustomed to me. What the press says won't matter because most voters will figure they know who I am. And if I *don't* run this time, I can go through this whole election cycle with reporters falling all over themselves writing fawning stories about how I'm so much better than the rest of these guys. (How about: "The Missing Savior" on the cover of two newsmagazines in the same week? If anyone can

pull that off, my press secretary Tony Blankley can.) So that's the ticket: Keep them thinking I'm running in 1996, but stay out of it.

Blankley says I have to stop keeping this diary because it might leak. He's wrong. Imagine what Rupert will pay for this. And if David Bonior says anything, I'll ask him why it was okay for the saintly Mario Cuomo to sell *his* diaries. Besides, if any of this leaks, I'll just say that it's a disgusting invention of an *unbelievably* cynical left-wing press corps. That *always* works.

people. He's the only one who understands the appeal of nationalism. Yeah, he's doing it wrong with the protectionism stuff—our business guys hate that. My formulation is better: "We want to communicate a vision of an America which is the decisive economic power on the planet, which is the most competitive nation, which is capable of leading the human race and which has reestablished here at home a culture that works. . . ." That way, you get all the nationalist votes, all the cultural conservative votes, but don't offend the entrepreneurs, the CEOs. They hear the free market stuff and ignore the cultural stuff. Smart guys. I mean, are these other Republicans as incredibly *dumb* as they look?

So, yeah, I'm extraordinarily hot right now and the other guys, very frankly, are behind the wave. This is truly the most extraordinary opportunity in generations to force the level of change the country needs to move into the 21st century. (Nobody knows what I mean when I say that, but they love it.) I'm also the only guy who can pacify all the