

The Relentless Innovator: Newt Gingrich Expands, Astounds and Unsettles

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What you are looking at is a draft book chapter -- one of about 16 that will comprise a history of the modern House GOP as conveyed "by and for" people who have worked in the U.S. Congress as Republicans.

To see the book's opening chapter, recounting the rock-bottom state of the Party in the mid-1970s, use www.ExactingEditor.com/Seventy-Five.html

And this chapter floodlights **Newt Gingrich** during the early 1980s. Don't just absorb what he says, but get used to how he thinks, and talks, because the *modus operandi* is going to change very little over the subsequent decades. The man is a Relentless Innovator (in terms of weekly operations) and an Extraverted Intuitor (using the "psychological types" framework developed by Carl Jung 90 years ago).

"There are consistencies of pattern but not consistencies of process," Gingrich tells his Washington staff in April 1983: "You can't predict from day to day what I'll do, but you can predict from day to day what, in a general way, I'll be doing." One consistent pattern is offering, to his recruits and allies, presentations that sound -- for a while -- like plans. The only dependable "plan" consisted of the next however-many projects to transform Congress.

Gingrich's target -- going back to a column he and original comrade Jim Tilton wrote and mailed to the *New York Times* at the age of 18 -- is the replacement of Congress's Democratic majority with a Republican one. To get there, Newt will have to become a genius at marketing -- which in politics is more often termed "strategy" -- and the national party will have to learn to listen to him.

His base-building in Georgia, and first four House campaigns, will never be better covered than they are in Dr. Mel Steely's 2000 book *The Gentleman From Georgia*. Steely knew all the players, is a trained historian, and taught at the same college as Gingrich for 7 1/2 years. On November 7, 1978, a year of national GOP rebirth, Gingrich defeated Democrat Virginia Shapard 54 to 46%. Reaching the Floor of the House on January 3, 1979, Gingrich enters the belly of the beast -- primed to generate acid indigestion. The Democrats had run the place for 24 years.

During the second half of the 1970s, Gingrich built a solid relationship with WXIA anchorman John Pruitt (it's channel 11 in Atlanta -- the XI means 11; the A is for the city). About six months into Gingrich's freshman term, they tape a show, which runs on July 5th, and Pruitt hits him with an ultra open-ended question: "What's the state of Congress now?" It's the guest's favorite type of question. And?

What's happened -- to sound like a college teacher for a second -- [is that] Congress used to be a place people were sent to. You elected a guy, and [he] went up there and he got to be part of the system -- and then he came back home and reported. Well [thanks to broadcast media and travel by jet], Congress is changing. It is less and less a "collegial" body hidden away from the country, and it's beginning to be sort of a national convention [to which] we elect the delegates every two years -- [and the Members] don't yet know how to organize this new organism...you know, Sam Rayburn wouldn't do any better than Tip O'Neill [because] the institution's changing and we're in a period of real chaos, because the pressures and the patterns and the news-delivery [are] all different than they were 25 years ago.

On the upside, Gingrich is now inside a House that is "more open, more honest [and] works harder -- that's one reason you see a lot of guys retiring." He points to "a rising professional kind of Congressman who really takes the job much like a medical doctor or a dentist or a lawyer -- they look at it as a real profession... But it's far harder to organize than it used to be." (Emphases are in the original audio, for this and all other broadcast sources and private interviews that appear as text.) "I think Rayburn was really a buddy system," Gingrich tells Pruitt. "This is not; this is a much tougher system to compete in than the Rayburn system was."

[Sam Rayburn](#) died in 1961, after 21 years as the top House Democrat, all but four of those years as Speaker. In 1970, the House was still a culture that Rayburn, had he been around, would have recognized. By 1978, though, freshman [Bob Walker](#) was making anti-Carter floor statements, while not thinking of himself as a television performer. And then, "after C-SPAN came in, I began to recognize the impact. I'd hear from people -- on both sides! 'What are you doing, you idiot?' And others would say: 'GOOD FOR YOU. Finally, somebody's standing up...'" He goes and tells Newt Gingrich: *We have to start using those cameras.*

Allowing for how much the House really did change during the 1970s -- explored at length in Chapter [TBD] -- the reader is encouraged to contrast the two House Republican Leaders who, between them, defined the congressional party during almost four decades. The first is Gerald Ford, remembered by everyone under the age of 60 for his Presidency even though he was a Congressman for 10 times as long; and then Gingrich, who used his time as GOP Whip (March 1989 to the end of

'94) to prepare -- to the extent he could prepare -- to ascend to the Speakership. Ford was minority leader for nearly 8 1/2 years and never got to be Speaker -- though he would've been a good one. Gingrich never held the post of minority leader but used his 5 3/4 years in the Whip role to develop discipline and rigor that pleasantly surprised many skeptics. Both men faced Democratic Administrations.

More on their distinctions in Parts 9 and 10. For the most part, though, this chapter plays out in Ronald Reagan's first term; and even though it can feel clumsy I will use "present tense" for this stretch from late 1980 into the boom year of '84.

Decades later, Gingrich will portray himself as a humble Reagan foot soldier, but that's mythology for hero-worshipping 2012 primary voters. The Relentless Innovator had given up on just about all of Reagan's people by the Fall of 1981.

For further context: Late 1980 is when Dick Cheney joins the House GOP Leadership, Trent Lott becomes Whip, and Bob Michel takes over as Minority Leader -- they comprise the trio that will interact with the Reagan Administration, on behalf of House Republicans, for its entire eight years.

Frank Gregorsky, January 2012
Oakton, Virginia (703) 281-1674

(1) Natural champion of all minorities with a future

On Sunday night, November the 30th, 1980, Ronald Reagan is fresh from a 44-state landslide, and Republicans will soon control the Senate for the first time since 1954. But Democrats still have a 50-seat majority in the House of Representatives.

The place is a ballroom somewhere in the D.C. area. The scene is a buoyant gathering -- dinner plus after-meal political chatter -- organized by the Free Congress Foundation. Or perhaps it's the National Republican Congressional Committee (NRCC). Gingrich has just been introduced by Free Congress founder Paul Weyrich, which leads one to think this isn't a formal Republican event.

But whether this is a Free Congress event or a GOP-run orientation weekend matters little. As a first-term Member of the U.S. House, Newt Gingrich has moved adroitly among the formal GOP campaign organs -- chiefly the NRCC led by his patron Guy Vander Jagt of Michigan -- and several conservative institutions: Weyrich's foundation and PAC, Ed Fuelner's Heritage Foundation, and Morton Blackwell's Leadership Institute.

On this November night in 1980, no establishment media people are in the audience. But a friend of the author's, at that point employed by Gingrich, is making a tape (which at one point preserves his hearty laughter). Probably not more than 20% will be able to swallow the whole Gingrich half-an-hour -- *a tour de force* that ends with a bold plan to unify with southern Democrats to overthrow the Speaker of the House, Thomas P. O'Neill. But the overthrow proposal is merely a bonus, something for the truly revolutionary plotters in the room.

The core of the audience is a large part of the 53-person House GOP freshman class. One can't know whether they are in the audience, but you will encounter four of these newcomers -- Tom Hartnett (SC), Bob McEwen (OH), Claudine Schneider (RI), and Denny Smith (OR) -- in later chapters.

Some 1980 freshmen not interviewed for this book will go on to make huge contributions. Lynn Martin of Illinois, according to veteran observer Jerry Climer, will manifest "the ability to be one of the boys [and] pull contesting sides back from the brink when they got too close to counterproductive decisions." Climer lauds this moderate GOPer for "never play[ing] the gender card" and for having a staff that "knew politics well, and she had great influence at the NRCC because of that."

Clay Shaw of Florida will serve 13 terms and be the pivotal Republican legislator on the House side for the biggest reform of welfare laws since the 1930s. Vin Weber has just been elected in a Democratic district in Minnesota and will be Gingrich's main man when they organize a faction within the House GOP. Other '80 newcomers, of course, will see their careers fall apart at the next election, as "Reaganomics" takes longer than expected to deliver job gains and prosperity.

And here's Newt Gingrich -- lone GOP Congressman from the state of Georgia -- addressing the largest Republican freshman class since late 1966. Did we say the gathering was buoyant? Well, not as Weyrich is setting the stage for Gingrich. Apparently things have been running late. Gingrich is at least the 10th and perhaps the 20th person to speak. But he knows how to do the good-natured launch.

Before limbering them up to join the Long March, he begins by relaxing the audience: "This [weekend] isn't totally a bad introduction to Washington, for those of you who are brand new to this business. Everything takes longer than it should. Everything gets drug out -- there's too much talk. We probably need more practical things, like standing for a minute."

Gingrich sounds a little hesitant. How much of what he would like to convey might they be expected to absorb without shutting down?

"All of you face, I think, a special challenge, and you will find [pause] most Members of the Republican Party in the House willing, indeed eager, for you to help row the canoe. On most occasions, if you have just have the simple...courtesy, you will find them eager for you to run around them, so long as you're not so impressed with yourself that you feel the need to run over them. And on most occasions, if you have an idea and are willing to fight for it, you'll find most of us open to being convinced."

"Most of us"? That sounds like someone who has been in Congress for several terms, not just the one. In another sense, though, Gingrich will always remain an outsider. For this Relentless Innovator, functioning as a partisan revolutionary, dawn will always be somewhere over the horizon; and the march will be as haunting and flaunting as it is daunting. The seniority he will accumulate, over the next nine terms, will not straighten out this visionary bent.

In an amazing piece of writing from 1923, the great psychologist Carl Jung sketched a "psychological type" that comes closer than anything else to telescoping Gingrich -- "telescoping" in the sense of bringing a far-out object into workable view. Jung described the Extraverted Intuitor:

Such a type is uncommonly important both economically and culturally. If his intentions are good -- i.e., if his attitude is not too egocentric -- he can render exceptional service as the initiator or promoter of new enterprises. He is the natural champion of all minorities with a future.

More from Jung soon, and "the natural champion of all minorities with a future" is resplendent this evening. Newt Gingrich is an independent agent who is defining, recruiting, building -- though not running anything. He won't even chair the meetings of his own future faction. To be a revolutionary is to be in the hills, or on the outskirts, auditing the other militants, planning to amass the forces that will facilitate a take-over of the capital city.

This mode -- to cite a down-to-earth political benefit -- lets him become a master at avoiding unpopular decisions. Revolutionaries do not administer the present; they shape popular expectations -- while also deploying troops -- for the bright future. Everything bad on the political landscape can be blamed on the group targeted for overthrow. Newt Gingrich is one of the great responsibility-fixers -- Democrats would use the term blame-placers -- in U.S. history.

But how might such skills serve national GOP officeholders as 1980 prepares to give way to 1981? If the incoming President is a principled and telegenic conservative idolized by millions, and you are addressing a celebration-minded band of

Republicans, where's the alarm? Gingrich is excited, too -- but he only uses celebratory vibes as fuel for the next advance.

(2) Professional life as a long series of congressional campaigns

His audience needs a lesson in divided government, and therefore apportionment of responsibility. Because the 1980 GOP steamroller has bypassed the body he serves in -- the federal House -- he is keen to advance the Reagan policy agenda even while reminding the Republican freshmen that they, and he, lack the majority power to carry it out.

[W]e don't have a majority -- and that's something we better understand tonight and talk about [during] the next few weeks. The problem we face is that the news media has given us the majority! You can find a dozen articles that talk about how we have a "working majority" in the House [and saying] the Republicans now have to govern... I want to govern for a generation. But, to govern for a generation, we have to recognize we have not won the war. Nineteen-eighty was not Waterloo for modern liberalism.

With the '78 elections, "we chopped up a lot of [Senate] liberals; in the House we gained ground." Here in November '80, "we won the Presidency, we gained further ground [in the House] and we actually gained control of the Senate." Well and good. But Republicans need to avoid being seen as responsible for what goes on in the House of Representatives. And so -- the time for celebration has come and gone. Move on to strategy-formulation for the next campaign cycle.

Ever since Newt Gingrich ran Jack Prince's losing congressional campaign -- in Georgia, in 1964, at the age of 21 -- he has measured professional life in terms of congressional campaigns. He wanted to run for Congress in 1966, but -- and this might be a joke told to encourage a young admirer years later -- "Jim Tilton reminded me I was too young to be sworn in."

So, not four weeks after Reagan's smashing victory, he tells the Class of '80: "1982 is the key. Because 1982 will decide whether in fact this country decides to ratify a new majority of conservatism [or] whether there's a resurgence of a more moderate, more effective liberalism." He offers Senator Paul Tsongas, a Massachusetts Democrat, as an example of a neoliberal who is "not stupid." According to Gingrich, Tsongas and other young Democrats will recast and popularize their goals if we Republicans don't do the same for ours.

In the end, November '82 does not confirm either of Gingrich's outcomes. The Democrats will add 26 House seats as the Republicans add two Senate seats -- a split decision, though tilted toward the Democrats -- and Senator Tsongas won't do any intellectual innovating until the early '90s. Reagan's approval rating will fall from 70 to 40% and then rise with the recovering economy during 1983-84.

That's the business cycle at work, and Gingrich's historical coaching pays it very little heed. Instead, adroit rhetoric can leapfrog economic tar pits. His career confirms an unlimited faith in political language -- with, of all people, Franklin Roosevelt as role model. Inspired by FDR, Gingrich will offer his GOP colleagues "language patterns" that are visionary and polarizing at the same time.

According to Claremont McKenna Professor John J. Pitney, one of his most thorough chroniclers and in no way an ideological foe, "Gingrich is a lot like George Lakoff, author of *Don't Think of an Elephant!* They share a belief in the power of language, and tend to ignore its limitations. As with so many of Newt's pet ideas, it's not that it's totally wrong, but that he greatly oversimplifies it."

"Voters think in dichotomies," Gingrich told this writer in 1978 -- but someone has to put the choice in front of them; someone has to "pose the question." Every campaign, ideally, comes down to a posed question; and each unavoidable fact must be sifted and sorted to confirm the Yes/No and Us/Them polarity. It's a mindset and skill-set that makes Gingrich a strong adviser and recruiter but a weak analyst. The weakness of the analysis is masked because he can serve up historical examples that clarify and excite, even as they distort and mislead.

In a paper circulated over eight years later (February 1989), looking at U.S. political realignments from 1792 on, Gingrich will advocate "delegitimizing the opposition." One of several examples: "By painting 'them' (Republicans) as the selfish, unfeeling and exclusive creators of Hoover's Depression, Roosevelt's coalition made everyone else seem like one of 'us.' Republicans were greedy, rich, uncaring members of exclusive country clubs."

Left out is that Democrats -- going back to William Jennings Bryan and ahead to Al Gore -- run that kind of national campaign regardless. Among the challengers, only Adlai Stevenson and Bill Clinton, since World War Two, have downplayed the class warfare. As for FDR, he indeed did what Gingrich says -- but how necessary was it in 1932? After all, since 1929, unemployment had risen from 3 to 25% -- under a Republican President. The strident FDR rhetoric probably helped in 1936, but to work at all it needed the backdrop of a recovery -- a recovery from the Hoover Depression. Great political language needs corroboration from the economy.

So the question becomes: Did the Roosevelt Realignment take place mostly because of the economy? Or did it happen, and the Democrats marginalize the GOP, more because Democratic political skills and strategic wordplay -- again, a form of national marketing -- overrode a decade, the 1930s, of stubborn mega-slump?

On the night of November 30, 1980, the business cycle is a bit player.

(3) The point of recommending FDR to conservative Republicans

Consider off-year elections for the U.S. House and Senate. "Only once in this century -- in 1934 -- did the party in the White House gain ground."

Gingrich has had '34 as a benchmark -- really a lodestone -- for years. A few months into his freshman term, several Washington staff were encouraged to read books on congressional elections. This writer, as an intern, was glad to get the assignment. I learned how Congress changed profoundly between 1928 -- when Herbert Hoover won 44 states and the GOP had logged over seven decades as America's majority party -- and 1936, when FDR carries all but two states, and the Democrats have nearly as many Senators (75) as the Republicans have House members (87).

The lesson should be that economic policy counts for more than rhetoric. It was President Hoover's actions that turned a market crash and deep recession into the worst Depression since the 1890s. Hoover lobbied companies to avoid wage cuts. He signed a tariff-raising bill that caused a trade war. He pushed Congress to raise income taxes. And worst of all, despite having turned the Commerce Department during the 1920s into a vacuum cleaner for economic data, this President and his people seemed to have little idea that the money supply was collapsing.

Given that track record, one could say that Herbert Hoover deserved every brick the Democrats flung his way during 1932, and for years to come. The fact that conservative intellectuals (and lately Hoover's granddaughter Margaret) still make excuses for this most befuddled and counterproductive of Republican leaders shows the emphasis Republicans place on pedigree and tradition.

And one of the best things any Republican can say about Newt Gingrich is that he'll not be caught speaking or writing a favorable word about Herbert Hoover.

In four successive elections -- 1930, '32, '34 and '36 -- the Republican Party was shattered -- reduced to an assortment of redoubts and enclaves. GOP numbers in the House and Senate declined each time. When the House convened in January 1937, there were only those 87 House Republicans, facing 333 Democrats.

The GOP had entered a dark age of being outnumbered on Capitol Hill, and Newt Gingrich, from the early '60s on, made it his life's work to undo the 1930s -- not the laws, but the partisan division of power. This goal gives Newt Gingrich the focusing power to keep the bulk of his relentless experimenting in a definable "lab."

Knowing it needs to be said twice, he tells the Class of '80 freshmen: "We must match the precedent of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the New Deal. Let me repeat that, because I don't think anybody in our Leadership has thought that through yet -- and I say that with all deference to all of our guys here who are running" for Leadership posts in the internal elections set for early December of '80.

He repeats it: Let's match the FDR precedent of 1933-34.

If Gingrich wanted a superb example of tireless political leadership, he could have chosen the other Roosevelt -- Theodore, who kept the Progressives and the classical big-business conservatives from tearing each other apart during his 7 1/2 "bully" years as President. This would have made Gingrich's next 20 years of coaching a good deal easier to absorb for most Republicans.

But TR isn't the right model, because Theodore Roosevelt did not unravel an existing majority. He was not a destroyer, but rather a conservative innovator who led wisely. During an era much like the 1960s, he headed off the "lunatic fringe" of socialist quackery while not being cowed by the anti-government mega-capitalists. Teddy Roosevelt built on the revived Republican majority coalition birthed by Mark Hanna and William McKinley in 1896. In the process he delivered the strongest Presidency since Abraham Lincoln and was rewarded, in 1904, with one of the more emphatic landslides (an 18-point majority) in U.S. history.

Gingrich credits TR for solid political management and foreign-policy leadership. But FDR gets far more accolades because he presided over what Gingrich is aiming to achieve 50 years later: Unravelment of the longstanding partisan framework.

To Gingrich, late 1980 looks tantalizingly like late 1932. Herbert Hoover had been engulfed and defined by Depression, Jimmy Carter by energy chaos and Inflation. In losing his reelection bid, President Hoover carried only six states; in losing his own bid, President Carter carried only six states. After four years of Jimmy Carter and an overwhelmingly Democratic House and Senate, the foreign policy of the United States is in a shambles; inflation has climbed from 5% to over twice that level; unemployment started Carter's term at 8%, bottomed at 5.6, and is now heading back to 8%; all the while gas at the pump has doubled in price.

So: Late 1932, late 1980, with a mood of economic fear approaching crisis characterizing the country in both cases -- although, in any absolute sense, the economic deprivation and insurrectionary risks facing the incoming FDR vastly outran the situation now faced by President-elect Reagan.

Gingrich summons his new colleagues to a lofty professional standard: "If anything, we take ourselves not seriously enough." Yes, that one needs some quick explaining. "Congressmen and Congresswomen have vast capacities for being pompous -- at an ego level, we take ourselves far too seriously. But, as elected sworn upholders of the future of this country, I think we all too often take ourselves too lightly. We wait for Presidents to propose. We wait for other groups to suggest..."

This is Gingrich at his best -- elevating his colleagues to a status and mindset far above the trash talk of the media, who can't seem to cover "Congress" as other than scandals, deficits and the occasional televised probe of something that makes for riveting video. "The purpose of the House of Representatives is to speak for the people -- that's why we get elected every two years. The Founding Fathers wanted one branch to stay scared -- and we're it." Mild chuckling.

"It is our duty [pause] to uphold that Constitution we swear to uphold, just as the President does. His inauguration is bigger -- fancier -- [but] ours is just as solemn, and the oath is just as sacred." Here Gingrich displays a commanding moral authority. Probably only three or four dozen people have ever made as much out of a single congressional seat as he will -- and one can sense it this early.

We are [pause] the leadership of the United States of America [pause] for our generation -- period. There ain't nobody else to carry the ball! This meeting tonight [pause] is a leadership meeting [pause] of the largest most complex free society in the history of the world... Ronald Reagan and Ed Meese and [veteran Capitol Hill negotiator] Bill Timmons haven't got a prayer of saving this country without your active, vigorous, aggressive, hard-working, tough [pause], combative, vigorous involvement.

(4) Longing to beat the business cycle with a bidding war

Ronald Reagan's convention speech back in July had been built around five words: "Family. Work. Neighborhood. Peace. Freedom." And Congressmen Jack Kemp, Ed Bethune, Don Ritter, of course Gingrich and other recent additions to the House GOP have taken pains, in Kemp's case going back to 1975, to assure that the party's economic message includes hope and opportunity, not just fiscal rectitude.

Looking back at 1975-80, Trent Lott says: "We got down to 144 House seats. So we circled the wagons and sustained a lot of Ford's vetoes. Then we started tryin' to figure out how to claw our way back -- get out of that hole. A lot of people say, 'Well, it began with Ronald Reagan.' No. It had already started. A lot of Reagan's ideas came out of the House." And yes, "Jimmy Carter helped us a lot."

With Carter's eviction notice delivered, Gingrich declares to his audience: "For one moment in history, conservatism is the pro-change political force in America... something that hasn't been true since the McKinley Revolution... It is liberalism that is for standing pat, and preserving the status quo..."

Still, he likely disorients his audience by dwelling on Franklin Delano Roosevelt's first presidential term. How is FDR a model for burying stand-pat liberalism? "Just as he swept away a generation of ideas and leaders with new ideas, new leaders, and new programs, so we must sweep the stage clear and vigorously build new themes, new slogans, and new leaders. Our opportunity exists because modern liberalism turned the New Deal into a Shrinking Deal," the result of "a gasoline tax or gasoline rationing so Americans couldn't drive" and "taking more and more taxes from Americas until their take-home pay shrank below 1965 levels..."

"Now the burden is on us" -- as he calls upon the incoming federal Republican team to replace the Shrinking Deal of modern liberalism with the Better Deal. "If we can focus on the question of creating a generation of minority entrepreneurs, we won't have to keep fighting the traditional poverty-program battles."

He urges the Class of '80 to not write off the National Education Association, and instead reach out to its state chapters; and to work with local teachers who think independently and care about classroom discipline and merit systems. Similar examples are offered regarding small-business owners, senior citizens, and health-care methods based on cost-benefit analysis that bypass the bureaucrats.

"Better Deal" is not just a rhetorical riff on FDR. It signifies the core Gingrich premise that politics is a bidding war. He ignores the business cycle, sees voters as organized interest groups, and will use tax breaks to enlist them. In a 1981 document called "Key Steps to Building a Governing Majority," he calls for "iron triangles" on the right to outbid the ones built up by liberals.

Much like the idolization of Franklin Roosevelt, this will cause headaches for Gingrich's logical allies who long to drain the swamp rather than breeding "alligators" -- right-wing interest groups nurtured by tax breaks -- to put up against the long-time liberal "crocs."

Best example: When President Reagan, looking for a big initiative after a bland 1984 campaign, opts to work with certain House Democrats to remove loopholes in order to further reduce individual tax rates, Newt Gingrich will be flummoxed. More loopholes -- exemptions, deductions, credits -- are basic to his political model. He will spend the rest of his days dismissing one of the great bipartisan legislative breakthroughs, namely the Reagan-Rostenkowski-Packwood tax reform legislation of 1986. (Admittedly, it doesn't help the bill -- today -- to put the name of its key House and Senate crafters on it.)

But, in fairness to the Gingrich model throughout the 1980s, the goal is not tax breaks just for their political utility. Many of them he explains as a way to enable private-sector breakthroughs. He also demands public-sector breakthroughs.

Note that I've been talking over and over about inventions. Not about ideas or programs or speeches. Because it is in a practical working world of real government, where you really deliver services, where you really change the rules...that we have to succeed. The New Deal was not just a speech; the New Deal was a government which changed the lives of Americans in a two-year period -- not massive as historians would tell you, but enough. Enough that they had hope when they went to vote in 1934.

Actually, it was much more than "hope." Here's what really happened between November 1930 -- the beginning of the end of a 70-year GOP majority in America -- and November 1936, when FDR defeated Alf Landon by 24 percentage points.

Year	Nomnl GNP (billions)	Jobless Rate	Weekly Mfg Gross	Housing Starts	Bus-failures per 1,000	Dem House Members
1930	\$90.4	8.7%	\$23.00	330,000	122	+53
1931	75.8	15.9	20.64	254,000	133	
1932	58.0	23.6	16.89	134,000	154	+90
1933	55.5	24.9	16.65	93,000	100	
1934	65.1	21.7	18.20	126,000	61	+9
1935	72.2	20.1	21.56	221,000	62	
1936	82.5	16.9	23.82	319,000	48	+12

[Source for all but the rightmost column: *The Economic Report of the President*, 1970]

Red shows the bottoming-out; green highlights the new and healthier trend.

Gingrich does not say this, but various conservatives have claimed that “FDR failed to end the Depression” and therefore the Democrats’ newfound political dominance must be a result of presidential rhetoric, GOP incompetence, interest-group rearrangement, and garden-variety chicanery.

Bigger than all of that -- the reason FDR’s polarizing language had the political wind at its back, and Democrats kept gaining House strength -- was the business recovery, which included the greatest bull market in the shortest time ever (with the Dow Jones Industrials index quadrupling from mid-1932 to mid-1937).

But economic statistics are dry, while vintage political speeches resonate across the decades. Yes, FDR as President excelled at political polarization. He “demonized” -- to use a common contemporary term -- his partisan opponents in ways his liberal and academic admirers never found fault with. And this is why Newt Gingrich commends him to Republicans as the Reagan Era is dawning: Every question of domestic governance ought to start with political language; partisan polarizers; and how the polls suggest to put the grand case together for the next election.

There also needs to be a Promised Land. Ronald Reagan understands this, and so did FDR, but Newt Gingrich is going them one better by being able to look out further and with a lot more tangibility. If you asked him today, he wouldn’t change a word of this declaration -- our final passage from that magical night of November 30, 1980 -- and we wouldn’t want him to:

We're on the verge of a revolution comparable to the rise of electricity, chemicals, the automobile and the airplane between 1870 and 1920. This revolution will be information and communications. We see the tip of it in cable television, home video systems, computerized chess games, computer mailings...your own campaigns have bits and pieces of it. Thirty years from now, some society on Earth -- if we're lucky, it'll be this one -- will [be using] information in ways that are currently unthinkable... [E]very small business, every community, every neighborhood, every school, will be tied into a national information network on a scale that's currently inconceivable. That revolution in ideas, hardware and human habit will increase our competitiveness, cut our energy and other costs, and expand our range of choice and lifestyle and activities...

(5) Alienated from party elders; sidetracked by the Reagan Recession

How President Reagan and his lobbying team worked with congressional Republicans and a few dozen conservative Democrats to implement a fairly radical economic program by August 1981 is covered in another chapter. This chapter centers on a Relentless Innovator -- the House Republican for whom “strategy”

will always be marketing at the highest level -- and why, one-third of the way though his second House term, he gives up on his party elders.

After signing the landmark tax and budget legislation in California on August 13, 1981, Reagan stays out of Washington for four weeks. Congressional Republicans are out of breath, with Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker famously describing Reaganomics as a "riverboat gamble." Later data will show that a new recession had commenced in July. In September, Budget Director David Stockman tells senior staff that the deficit projections are growing by the hour. So, forget balancing the budget by 1984, and not even by '86. Once back in Washington, Reagan rules out backtracking on the tax reductions or the defense build-up.

In his neutral to critical book on the Reagan Presidency, Richard Reeves quotes second-term GOP Congressman Dick Cheney telling his executive-branch colleagues: "The White House is going to have to face up to something: This isn't the time to launch a new bloodletting. People aren't convinced it's needed. We've been through seven months of political trauma around here -- people are shell-shocked and antsy. You're not going to get a consensus for anything big or meaningful. So I think we have to ride it out a while -- see where we are in January. The deficit isn't the worst thing that could happen."

Gingrich and Cheney both entered the House in 1979. Having served under President Ford, Cheney has a keen feel for presidential responsibilities. Gingrich's model is FDR, not Jerry Ford (to put it mildly). He imagines that FDR in office always fought to dominate the agenda. Even if that's not true, and FDR made massive blunders from January 1937 into '39, the premise of domination -- always fight, always polarize, always lead the parade -- is the default setting for Newt Gingrich.

And, in late 1981, the Relentless Innovator is alarmed. Things are not going according to plan. He had told the freshmen, "Everything takes longer than it should," without expecting that Reaganomics might also stretch itself out.

The Federal Reserve Board, led by Paul Volcker, continues to squeeze inflation out of the system. Five thousand auto dealerships have shut down since 1978, and new-car sales during '82 will drop below six million. Mortgage rates are 15% and the housing market is frozen. When unemployment hits 9%, presidential spokesman Larry Speakes calls it "the price we have to pay" for throttling inflation -- and Newt Gingrich is furious: How dare any Republican take responsibility for the dark side, the stiff if temporary pain, of a conservative reform agenda?

Gingrich is also suspicious. Somebody is sabotaging the Republican plan for prosperity. He tells his staff to get a complete rundown on Paul Volcker. Isn't the

Fed Chairman a Democrat? And didn't Jack Kemp tell us that the Phillips Curve was dead, and that tax reductions will stimulate economic growth even as constraining the money supply ends the country's inflationary fever? What gives? How might Republicans blame Democrats for whatever part of this picture is wrong?

One new mega-fact cheering all Republicans -- incrementalist, revolutionary and everyone in between -- is the victory over inflation. Inflation was the malignancy, during '79 and '80, that Beltway pundits said America should get used to. Now inflation is crashing, unemployment spiking, and a tradeoff dismissed by the supply-siders is there for all but true believers to see. When the consumer price index registers a zero increase during one month in the Spring of 1982, Gingrich and a few colleagues take out a "special order" to claim credit.

Also playing its part: The fate of "PATCO," the Professional Air Traffic Controllers Union. Their illegal strike started at 7 a.m. on the morning of August 3, 1981. Within hours Reagan read his own statement in the Rose Garden, starting with the oath taken by each air-traffic controller: "I am not participating in any strike against the Government of the United States, or any agency thereof, and I will not so participate while an employee of the Government..." For that reason, those who stayed home that morning "are in violation of the law, and if they do not report for work within 48 hours, they have forfeited their job, and will be terminated." No bargaining.

Gingrich supported Reagan against PATCO, and some months later a poll of his district turns up a figure that brings belated relief: 43% of Georgia's sixth district would be "much less likely" to support a candidate for the House who had backed the air-traffic controllers in their bid for immediate \$10,000 raises and the right to retire after 20 years at 75% of their salary.

Otherwise, Gingrich is distancing from President Reagan without opposing him. He now dismisses as hopeless all of the White House people, except for pollster Dick Wirthlin and one or two of the speechwriters: "You had a White House [staff that did] not have a clue.... They thought it was their job to maximize the President's personal strength so that they could manipulate the establishment, which they believed was inherently Democrat."

The GOP dominance over domestic policy is gone, and will stay gone for all of 1982. There is no way to make the public believe that a better economy is right around the corner, and so -- the Reagan Administration has changed the subject. Making a virtue of what Cheney had told them was necessary, they are educating the public that America's defense buildup and installing Pershing-II missiles to support the NATO countries might take years to bear fruit in the form of a transformed relationship with the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, war breaks out -- between Argentina and Great Britain -- over control of the Falkland Islands, and Israel is striking back against the roughly half of Lebanon that would like it to disappear. But very few congressional races are going to be decided on Lebanon, the Falklands, or Pershing-II missiles.

Newt Gingrich is exasperated. He tries to recast the President as the Great Articulator, as opposed to "Communicator." It seems like a quibble to his staff. But Gingrich is able to view Ronald Reagan as effective only if he is echoing what polled majorities already believe.

Gingrich also dismisses Senate Budget Committee Chairman Pete Domenici as "stupid" for being inadequately partisan on the Sunday interview shows. He has read the transcripts of the ones with Republican guests and put together his own analysis. More coaching? Always -- we must get the language right. The polarity must never be "Congress versus the President." What everyone should be saying on TV and radio is "Republicans right, Democrats wrong." Now and then Gingrich seeks a receptive ear among his Senate peers, but has no luck.

(6) Advocating shutdowns, nearly 14 years before the big one

By 1982, Gingrich's Washington staff has evolved a rule: Unless Newt asks about something for a third time, and if the new idea has nothing to do with constituent-service, don't expend any time or energy on it. (Constituents deserve to be served, but Newt's intuitive universe has the capacity to be a black hole.)

In 1991, the chief of staff from 1982 is talking with his counterpart in what has become a much larger assembly of hired Gingrich legislative operatives. Mister 82 says to Mister 91: "How do you guys avoid being overwhelmed by Newt's projects?" Mister 91 replies: "We have a rule: We don't do anything on a given idea until Newt brings it up a third time." Do tell! This "third time" wheel truly needed reinventing. It is a law of human nature that -- to a Relentless Innovator -- 95% of the people in his midst will seem "bureaucratic." And when he is paying the salaries of some of these folks, the level of frustration will be off the scale.

Political pros were perhaps left cold by my earlier citation of Carl Jung regarding how Gingrich's "psychological type" functions. So let's go even further back in time, while staying in the realm of parliamentary struggle:

[T]he openness of Disraeli's mind meant that he sometimes played with ideas that were impracticable, even foolish, and that he very often made observations

totally contradicting opinions which he had judiciously propounded earlier or was to propound later. That is why judicious selectivity can make Disraeli appear a consistent democrat or an inconsistent demagogue, according to taste. The truth is that he had one real objective, but that he had a mind full of half-thought-out theories, which sometimes emitted flashes of brilliant intuition, but [also] sometimes, as Baillie-Cochrane had observed, ended in 'the mere phantasmagoria of politique legerdemain.'

Benjamin Disraeli, as you likely know, was a great Conservative Party builder from another century and nation; and the passage above is from pages 397-98 of Robert Blake's wonderful biography *Disraeli*. (To round out the reference, Alexander Baillie-Cochrane was also 1st Baron Lamington, a younger apologist for, but not slavish loyalist to, his parliamentary leader.)

Disraeli's "one real objective" was giving the British Conservative Party a popular base, and some of the related experiments traumatized the classical Tories. Similarly, Gingrich's "one real objective" -- which he sometimes put under the fuzzier goal of saving Western civilization -- was the replacement of a decades-old House Democratic majority.

But how can that be achieved, or even talked about credibly, with unemployment rising by the month?

January 1982: Eager to seize back control of the domestic agenda for the GOP in January, Gingrich writes out 34 bill titles, and informs the D.C. staff that he will introduce all of those in a legislative form, soon. Five unified staffers, worrying about House overkill and political humiliation in Georgia, talk him out of it.

Yet Gingrich never buys their logic. He tells aide Reid Spearman on April 28, 1983: "In retrospect, I'm not sure whether we would've been better off to introduce all those bills just to have them alive so candidates could have used them in 1982. But I think we could not have done the work [even though 34 bills] was the right strategy. I didn't know how to organize a project of that size. It's taken me the last year to learn how to manage that big a project... If I had known then what I know now, I would have gotten Heritage to write the bills."

Alarmed by the original 34-bill lunge, one of the D.C. staff calls Bob Weed for advice. Weed, campaign consultant in 1978, first chief of staff in D.C., and manager during Gingrich's delicate reelection drive in 1980, is the rare operative who can match him at the level of grand strategy. Weed recalls a favorite quote came from a former Harvard President: "The more radical you're going to be, the more conservative you need to sound." Translation: The bigger the agenda Newt wants to trot out, Weed

tells the D.C. staff, the quieter he needs to be about it. And he needs to be sure that each element of the agenda can stand on its own.

It's one Weed recommendation that never takes hold. As Gingrich tells his staff in this yeasty year of '82: "I don't do by planning, I plan by doing." Someone suggests checking into what bills are already out there that could fit, in a good-enough way, the marketing needs of House Republicans. Embarrassment is averted.

Middle of March 1982: Gingrich goes to Emory University -- where he had earned his Ph.D., and where fellow rising GOP southerner Bob Livingston had obtained his Law degree -- and delivers a talk full of poll results.

Having given up on the Reagan White House, he is looking to build a "paradigm" that can mobilize a House faction. He is rightly tired of assembling each political endeavor in a helter-skelter way. He needs troops -- predictable allies -- and an alternative tool for economic landscaping.

Above all, he seeks a way to deposit a burgeoning federal budget deficit on the doorstep of the House Democratic majority. The original Reagan script called for a three-stage tax cut, restoring GDP growth in '82, and a balanced budget in 1984. The second two are now out of the question, and partisan dangers are high. In terms of simple math, rising joblessness and a surging budget deficit go hand in hand another; and, in political terms, they shred much of the 1980 GOP message.

What to do? To his Emory audience, Gingrich declares: "We are morally obligated to oppose the continuation of a deficit policy so disastrous that interest payments this year cost more than the Army and Marine Corps combined... Now is the time to force the United States government to quit passing bad checks in the form of goods and services we aren't paying for -- and I feel no moral obligation...to subsidize bad behavior."

To not raise the national-debt ceiling means shutting down at least parts of the government. Everyone will know this by 1995, but in '82 it's a novel idea. The Relentless Innovator is drawn to the drama:

I am perfectly willing to see the government come to a halt for two or three or four weeks this Spring, to have every evening television news covering the crisis, and to ensure that the American people understand that Tip O'Neill, and [Budget Committee chair] James Jones, and their friends, run the House of Representatives. I am very willing to go to the American people then and say: "All right, do you want their policies, their disaster, their interest rates, their tax program -- or do you want change?"

"Or, conversely" -- he has now stopped shouting -- "if Mr. O'Neill doesn't want that to happen, I am perfectly willing for him to help us pass the program that will allow him to avoid that crisis."

Gingrich names the related conditions for debt-ceiling extension: (1) A Floor vote on a constitutional amendment to balance the budget; (2) preservation of the third year of the individual income tax cut and indexing [of the rates after they are lowered] -- which House Democrats will soon vote to repeal; and (3) "such fundamental changes in federal spending policies as are necessary to dramatically cut the 1983 deficit and to bring the 1985 budget into balance."

(7) Intellectual honesty is a dead end for any marketing genius

Those who took part in the Emory University symposium of March 17-18, 1982, saw the creative recklessness of Newt Gingrich. People given to this much innovation are a tonic in a large political body, where peers can sift and sort (or sit on) what they dream up; in a top-down executive situation, there would be dangers.

Let's bring back the wider fiscal and philosophical realities of 1981-82:

- As of early '82, the U.S. is in the process of a five-year doubling of the defense budget in current dollars -- from \$138 billion to \$261 billion by 1986. This is vital to Ronald Reagan's agenda, the buildup requires borrowing, and most hawks, when pressed, are making a case for doing so. The long-term savings from ending the Cold War will turn out to be much vaster than the deficits aggravated by the spending needed for the U.S. to be able to win it. (A point Dave Stockman never does grasp.)
- As of early '82, only one-fifth of the Reagan income-tax changes -- 5% of the 25% in rate reductions -- have been implemented. But a vast array of corporate tax giveaways were used as sweeteners to get the original Kemp-Roth bill passed (more on the seemingly necessary legislative chaos of 1981 in the next chapter). Thanks to "safe-harbor leasing," some Fortune 500 companies will pay zero taxes during a year when unemployment rises by over a third. Gingrich supported all those "extra" tax cuts and they are worsening the red ink here in 1982.
- And -- of course -- no elected Republican during 1981 had told voters that the unemployment rate might rise by anything like one-third. Now that it's in the process of doing that, revenues plunge -- and the so-

called "automatic stabilizers" sustain purchasing power while, yes, adding to the deficit.

Adding it up (and here we don't even need to use numbers): For the Reagan Administration to back a small group of House radicals in calling for a federal government shutdown -- right when Reagan & Co. need a temporary spike in red ink to fund an ambitious agenda of defense increases and tax cuts -- would be a toxic brew of political brazenness and stock-market insanity.

Yet there's Gingrich -- not off the cuff, not thinking out loud, and not at the NRCC, but in an organized presentation at a university -- righteously condemning Tip O'Neill and governmental "bad checks" for the exploding deficit forecasts. One contemporary fact is on his side: The House Appropriations Committee, chaired by lifetime pork-barreller Jamie Whitten of Mississippi, is by this point pushing billions in add-backs, partly undoing the Reagan budget reforms of 1981.

Otherwise, Gingrich's remarks at Emory U. are a mix of intellectual dishonesty and rollicking obliviousness. They show a blame-placer with no dimmer switch, and a fellow who can talk himself into the wildest of scenarios. In reality, President Reagan's agenda had been passed by both houses of Congress -- and it's simply taking much longer to work than Republicans had hoped.

What to do? It's pretty simple, and can engender respect, although it's in no way pleasant: Step up to the podium; admit to tactical misjudgments; ask for more time; make a partial apology; and then change the subject while keeping to your original long-term goals, which for GOPers in 1982 are low inflation, deep tax-rate cuts for individuals, and a doubled defense budget. That's political life, and it can function as a mix of humility, intellectual honesty, and cutting one's losses without a cave-in.

As we've seen, President Ford and his economic team, more outnumbered on Capitol Hill than Reagan, were good at the above mix. Here is one of my favorite statements from a U.S. President, quoted by John Osborne in *The New Republic* for July 29, 1975: "Painful as they are, higher prices do promote conservation, and higher prices do promote increased efficiency in the use of petroleum products." In contrast, "cheap energy encourages waste and preserves inefficient energy technology. When the price of energy reflects its true value to society, as determined by the market place, there will be an incentive to stop squandering it..."

I say "favorite" not because it's profound, but because it's unvarnished. One reads Ford's messages on spending-control and oil and gas policy, throughout 1975, and is startled at how unwilling he was to feed nonsense to the electorate.

Newt Gingrich is a different kind of leader. His intellectual powers can run wild justifying himself and Republican political needs, and -- sometimes -- justifying himself at the expense of Republican needs. In the Spring of '82, all he can think about is how to blame the House Democrats for a historic economic transition the voters are losing faith in. "And I think that confrontation has to occur."

It will -- although, like the Reagan economic boom, some objectives take a while to be realized. "I am perfectly willing to see the government come to a halt for two or three or four weeks," he said at Emory. And debt-ceiling extension will become a wedge for Newt Gingrich to force an array of Democratic officeholders to commit to a path to a balanced budget. The federal government will be shut down for a total of four weeks (six days one time, 21 days the next), and two-thirds of the voters will blame the Speaker of the House.

Except that, nearly 14 years after Gingrich fantasizes in public about causing this great partisan crisis, the Speaker so blamed won't be a Democrat.

(8) A polling gift from Bob Teeter; the stabilizing role of Bob Walker

Backbencher Gingrich still needs a way to recast the political landscape. Thanks to his relationship with Robert Teeter of Market Opinion Research, something valuable turns up in a way that lights a path to acquiring durable allies.

In March or April of '82, voters in the sixth district of Georgia, asked to assume they know nothing else about a congressional candidate -- i.e., existing party labels are set aside -- tell Teeter's poll-takers they will vote for someone who favors a "conservative opportunity state" over a "liberal welfare state." The division is 59 to 17%. "State" is changed to "society" some months later, because the latter word welcomes mediating institutions as elements of national renewal. Even before that amendment, "political language" has passed a critical field test.

Late that year, Gingrich and his wife Marianne

went up to see Richard Nixon. Nixon said you have to go back and found a group; you couldn't do anything as an individual. "House Republicans are boring; they were boring when I was there [laughter] -- and you need to make them interesting." So we set up COS, which I think began in March of '83; and my belief was -- and still is -- that you change the party from the right. You can't change the party from the center... It is the nature of parties to be changed by their most fervent advocates. And so it's very hard -- you can manage from the center, but you can't change from the center.

"COS," for the Conservative Opportunity Society, comes into existence -- as concept, language, and all-purpose choice-forcer -- a year ahead of when work groups and regular meetings begin to advance the related projects.

Bob Walker recollected in 2009: "Newt made a conscious determination that he'd go out and try to find the people who, in a variety of ways, had become conservative activists in Congress. He recruited me largely because of my activities on the Floor. And 'conservative' was rather loosely defined. I remember the first meeting that we had in your office -- where he invited these people to come together to consider what it was he had in mind -- it was a collection of people, some of whom were not hard-core conservatives. Among the people in the room was Hank Brown -- who wasn't a liberal but he was fairly moderate."

In fact, 14 months after the 34-bill scare, Rep. Brown of Colorado will offer to take charge of writing a COS legislative agenda -- which is a critical box Gingrich needed to check off in the first place.

"Vin Weber was our first chairman," says Walker. So Newt was never "the chairman"? "No! Newt never wanted to be the chairman. He always wanted to be able to sit on the side and kibitz" -- Walker is smiling here. "He never really wanted to 'run' the meetings -- and that stuck with him all the way through. Even as Speaker, he had me run the meetings. He wanted to be able to sit on the side."

And that's because the natural idea guy shouldn't be the guy with the gavel? "Right. Precisely. Yep."

Walker represented the 16th district of Pennsylvania, an area that never -- not even during the 1930s -- elected a Democratic Congressman. A man of courage, depth and good humor, he took risks to provide regular order on a Floor that was controlled by Democrats and sometimes exploited by his own party's budgetary opportunists. Fashioning GOP alternatives on space exploration and technology policy is another Walker legacy.

He also managed to be an open ally of Gingrich while staying cordial with Leader Bob Michel, who never liked Gingrich, and interacting with the latter's senior staff.

I never had a huge falling out with Bob Michel. I had voted for him [over Guy Vander Jagt in December 1980] to be Leader in the first place. Even during times when things were the most tense between Newt and Bob, and between their staffs and so on, I never lost my ability to talk to Michel [and his senior aides] Billy Pitts or Mike Johnson... Every once in a while, Bob would send Billy out. And sometimes I'd listen to Billy, and sometimes I wouldn't. The other thing

that would go on, though, is that Billy might show up on the Floor and say: "You know, something is coming up here that we can raise a major point of order on." So I'd get the credit for standing up with this very adroit point of order, and it had all been done by Billy Pitts. So there was really a two-way street there.

Here's more from Walker on the development of COS: "We started with early-morning meetings and kind of kept that pattern; and we ended up in the back corner of the Cannon Building as our regular place to meet. One of the early mandates was that the Member had to be there; you couldn't send just staff to the meeting. The Member could bring staff along with him if he cared to, but the Member had to attend. As we moved forward, the only exception to that was we allowed some Leadership staff -- Trent Lott's [chief aide] Dave Hoppe; people from Kemp's [Conference] shop; and so on."

But -- they were not the Society. For years to come, *Roll Call* and other Beltway press organs would refer to Gingrich, Walker, Weber and the others as "the Conservative Opportunity Society." Wrong. Those Representatives were not their own society; they were not a Reagan Era version of the Chowder and Marching Society founded by House GOPers 35 years earlier.

Rather, they, along with the two allied groups meeting each week, had agreed that the long-term goal was the creation of such a society -- or, looked at another way, moving the policies and culture of the United States away from welfare-statism. (Memo to future activists: Don't assume the media will use your terms the same way you deploy them at the start of the adventure.)

How "COS" interacted with House GOPers who disdained its risk-taking agenda is covered elsewhere. This particular chapter is about Gingrich, his use of polls and language, and his bent for polarization and confrontation.

And the next segment contrasts the two House Republican Leaders who, between them, defined the congressional party during almost four decades -- which means going back to the early 1970s as well as ahead to the middle and late '90s.

(9) Stepping outside this chapter's 1980-84 timeframe

What are the differences between Gerald Ford and Newt Gingrich when it came to leading the House Republicans? Jack Pitney observes:

A big difference between Ford and Gingrich was their approach to leadership. There are two sides to it -- the inside game of committees,

Floor debates, and procedure; and the outside game of media appearances and national party politics. Though Ford did work the press (e.g., “the Ev and Jerry Show”), he emphasized the inside game over the outside game. Though Gingrich had to devote a lot of time to Floor proceedings, he emphasized the outside game over the inside game.

People who never served with, or worked for, Gingrich can’t easily imagine how “outside” that game could get. Though it’s accurate to say “Gerald Ford came from Michigan and Newt Gingrich is from Georgia,” your awareness will stretch much further by declaring: “Ford was from Middle America and Gingrich hails from the Outer Limits.” That’s pretty much how Ford, keeping a hand in GOP politics well into his eighties, viewed the Gingrich Speakership (according to his journalistic friend Tom DeFrank, author of *Write It When I’m Gone*).

For his part, Gingrich told me in 1978 that he spent most of the Ford Presidency worrying that Ford would do something catastrophically “stupid.” He also mentioned that Ford had not earned the high college grades reported in press accounts. Had the two ever spent serious time together, it really would’ve been a case of Michigan sending signals to Mars, and Mars looking down on Grand Rapids.

The most far-reaching political leadership perspectives by Gingrich come during the most critical year of the most serious position he ever held: Speaker of the House. Several such statements can be found in Chapter 14 (“Newt Unchained”) of Elizabeth Drew’s book *Showdown* and, more strikingly, in Chapter 20.

No bloody way could she have patched together these words from notes. What follows has to be from a tape, because every word -- every inflection, each leap and lunge -- is the Relentless Innovator, preserved like a fly in amber, showing how his range of thought and desire to bring about upheaval are boundless:

What we’re doing [as the first Republican-controlled House since 1954] is a cultural revolution with societal and political consequences that ultimately changes the government. That is a vastly bigger agenda than has been set by any modern political system in this country.

Change in the government is a derivative, side effect, or lagging indicator. And the reason our agenda should prevail is because we don’t know how it works:

[S]ince we’re all brand-new, none of us has a clue how to do these things and so we’re having to learn, because we’re not doing what people used to do. We don’t resemble any previous system. There are no comparisons

that make sense because you've never had an information-age, grassroots-focused, change-oriented structure.

Poker-faced when she needs to be, Drew offers the Speaker low-key prompts and he keeps expanding, adding time projections to the delights of "scale." As of early August 1995, she inquires, how much energy does your revolution still have?

That depends on whether you're accelerating. If you're accelerating it's endless, because we have 260 million people to draw in. I don't think we'll crest before 2000 or 2004; as long as you're in the recruiting phase, you're adding, you have more energy every week, more people sign up.

Sounds like the Spontaneous Organization theory popular in Silicon Valley at that point in U.S. history. Management is becoming obsolete, and focus can be left to motivated individuals in a network if they share the same values and goals.

People try to understand us as a reformism within the old order [but one] of my key decisions in November of 1994 was to launch a revolutionary rather than a reformist effort. A revolutionary launches 60 battles. Two things happen: Each battle attracts its particular group, so you can increase your total energy level enormously, and you spread the opposition... They can beat you on any five things. They can't beat you on 60.

Looks like a key premise is that the opposition -- labor unions, PBS, trial lawyers, "the reactionary left," and the Democratic White House -- can't recruit, and that selecting one's battles is for losers. Gingrich goes on to say as much:

What happens is because they know each other, they get in a room and they try to set priorities... So then they burn up more energy trying to establish where to focus. Meanwhile, we don't try to focus anything. We just move on it all simultaneously.

Just as Vice-President Richard Nixon sought to validate himself by moving into crisis situations and writing about them in a book called *Six Crises*, Newt Gingrich -- while Speaker of the House -- treats upheaval as a kind of comfort zone. In 1995 he sees "focus" as a clear and present danger to his powers of intuition. Someone who functions in this manner really does conserve energy by avoiding focus. To focus is to be narrow, and to think and act narrowly is a straitjacket.

As Gingrich told Liz Drew: "You want to launch every possible fight simultaneously so that they are so distracted, and then they get together in a room because they're an organized establishment. We are a disorganized revolution."

Relentless Innovators, because they are so rare, end up being treated as freaks of nature. Innovators *per se* are not rare, especially in newer businesses, but it's the relentlessness of the rare ones that tends to wall them off: New followers replace tired or discarded ones, while friendships are few and far between. Says Jack Pitney of Gingrich: "People who know him personally soon get a feeling for his dark side," and Pitney cites the conclusion of veteran political and business consultant [Eddie Mahe Jr.](#): "Newt reads books. He doesn't do friendship."

Carl Jung wrote that the "extraverted intuitor...seizes on new subjects with great intensity, sometimes with extraordinary enthusiasm, only to abandon them cold-bloodedly, without any compunction and apparently without remembering them, as soon as their range is known and no further developments can be divined..."

For "new subjects," read "issues, projects, and language." Otherwise? Nailed.

And this part fits Newt Gingrich with zero alteration: "His morality is governed neither by thinking nor by feeling; he has his own characteristic morality, which consists in a loyalty to his vision and voluntary submission to its authority."

(10) Trusting relationships versus trust in one's visionary grasp

Congressman Jerry Ford earned loyalty and affection from his GOP peers. Bill Frenzel, ordinarily a genial cynic about Washington legislation and manners, said in 2010: "I have a very soft spot in my heart for Jerry Ford. He was a fine Leader. He worked 20 hours a day, he did everything he could [and as Vice-President] had to support a man of very bad character -- Richard Nixon -- and he did it the best way he could without giving away his own personal integrity. He was just a solid-gold person; I loved him."

[Ron Sarasin](#) is CEO of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society (www.uschs.org). During the 1970s he served three terms representing Connecticut's 5th district. Sarasin concurs with Frenzel, and adds a recollection from Ford's time as President:

Jerry Ford was a wonderful human being [and] a great friend of Helen Sewell, who ran the Republican cloakroom snack bar and had succeeded her father in doing that. Between them, they'd been there over 80 years, and Ford was her great friend. He'd come in and have his usual cottage cheese with Worcestershire sauce. You'd see him in the cloakroom -- [except] he's now the President of the United States!... It didn't happen very often, but a few times. He always remembered my name -- even if someone had just prompted him [laughter]. I thought he was a great President [and he was also] a good guy.

Even Gingrich's most tolerant allies do not recall him in anything like those terms.

Yet what did Gerald Ford, as the top House Republican, do to stop Richard Nixon's betrayals of conservatism? We can assume he made mild protests in private, but that's little more than an educated guess. The best book on how and why House conservatives gave up on Nixon -- Ed Feulner's *Conservatives Stalk the House* -- references Ford as a Nixon friend and loyalist, and thus part of the problem.

Even apart from the scandals, the Nixon record is one of expediency and delusion. His fiscal and regulatory moves make Jimmy Carter look like Ronald Reagan, and Reagan's greatest successes entailed ignoring or inverting the policies Nixon took the most pride in. Yet both the House and Senate Republican leadership teams mostly made excuses for Nixon as he ravaged, first, GOP principles, then the economy, and finally helped the party crash in 1974. (See the opening chapter.)

Gingrich, on the other hand, came in with a parliamentary boldness that this book lauds. In an AEI forum with Dick Cheney after both had just been elected to their second House terms, Gingrich said: "I think it is dangerous to think of Presidents as being more courageous than Congressmen. They just have better speechwriters and better makeup. Congressmen, collectively, are a more accurate reflection of the country..." That's a striking statement, and one more key to Gingrich's drive from the late '70s through the '94 GOP landslide. Without that and related premises, his relentless innovation -- the creative recklessness -- would have caused him to be dismissed as the Mad Scientist.

Instead, and even though he routinely unsettles them, causing several to drop away, a growing team of House peers realizes they have the best marketing consultant -- this "natural champion of all minorities with a future" -- to come along in their lifetime. They also -- by being his peers -- can tell Gingrich when to cool down, shut up, cancel the press conference, or give back the book advance.

To deliver more good than harm, an extraverted intuitor needs an institutional focus. Similarly, a relentless innovator requires some limits to be applied so that he or she doesn't revel in upheaval. The lack of self-discipline, and the daily tendency to lunge conceptually and operationally, have to be offset by institutional controls and especially a group who can say "no," more than once, and louder each time.

Dick Cheney was shaped by his time in the Nixon and Ford White Houses, and the exchanges with Gingrich at that AEI forum foretell what he will think and do as Vice-President, and what Gingrich will try as Speaker. More on this in a later chapter; for now, one more Gingrich statement from December 9, 1980:

In *The Federalist Papers* and in almost all the writing of the Founding Fathers, the writers were concerned that we have effective leadership in the Congress. It is among the Congressmen that the compromises should be made. It is the Congressmen who should have the level of political sophistication necessary both to manage the bureaucrats and to rearrange the legislation for our constituents. It is the failure of our generation to produce effective political and congressional leaders that points us toward the very grave danger, in the long run, of tyranny.

Armed with that commendable orientation, Newt Gingrich goaded and guided his congressional peers out of a long stretch in the desert. He got them to toughen up and be fellow majority-builders. Trent Lott recalls how Gingrich told him: "If you had stayed in the House, you'd have been Speaker, and had real power." And Lott recalls replying: "No, Newt -- if I had stayed in the House, we wouldn't have burned down the House the way you burned it; we wouldn't have had the revolution -- and so I probably never would have been Speaker."

A few weeks before he passed away at the age of 63, Tony Blankley correctly wrote of the 1989-94 period: "I remember most of [today's doubters] enthusiastically following his leadership year after year as the Republican Whip... It was the most successful congressional opposition movement since Benjamin Disraeli formed the modern Conservative Party in Britain in the mid-19th century."

During December 2011, the few former peers who came forth to say Gingrich should be President rightly pointed to the policy accomplishments of 1995-98. Blankley, Gingrich's spokesman during 1990-97, made the same connection.

Even so, the Speaker was fortunate to have the likes of Dick Armey and Tom DeLay on hand to turn grand strategy into in-house majorities. Moderate New Yorker Sue Kelly, whose six terms exactly paralleled the House GOP majority Gingrich did more than anyone else to build, recollected in 2010:

Tom DeLay was an incredibly good Whip... When a big bill was coming, we would have a Whip meeting. The meeting would start with "here's what's in this bill, and here's why it's good for America." Followed by "this is the likely blowback, the Democrats [will charge this and that]." And finally: "Here's why we need to get people together" ... Whatever else you say about him, Tom DeLay [here she taps the table] put that party together as a unit, so it would vote as a unit, and try to vote for a definite objective. And that's where Newt's vision didn't help the party. Ultimately it was DeLay who was able to make a cohesive party, because of the Whip activities. But it was not Newt.

(11) Sometimes in error, but never in doubt

Gingrich's mind, conduct and self-image were shaped by action movies (while young), science fiction and Toffler-style futurism (from 1970 on), the nature and lessons of military encounters over the ages, and regular injections of poll data.

Forget Edmund Burke, and forget Friedrich von Hayek, but do remember FDR.

One place where Gingrich is functionally a Democrat is in seeing voters as blocs and then wanting "our" interest groups -- speaking for these winnable categories of voters -- to be backed by government. "Backed" how? It could be ethanol subsidies, which Gingrich defends with bluster long after others have given up on them; but more often he'll help the right groups by taking action to protect their autonomy, or by granting tax credits. Poll numbers allow this political marketer and strategist to track the process and make reasonably rapid adjustments.

Jung: "If his intentions are good -- i.e., if his attitude is not too egocentric -- he can render exceptional service as the initiator or promoter of new enterprises. He is the natural champion of all minorities with a future."

As the temperatures warmed in 1983, Gingrich's key collaborators in the House -- Reps. Weber and Walker, Duncan Hunter and Connie Mack -- judged his intentions to be good, and mostly overlooked the operational messes. The Conservative Opportunity Society group of Members met, discussed, clarified mission and vision statements, held special orders televised by C-SPAN after the close of official House business, and prepared for a strong 1984. Inflation having been wrung out of the economy, non-inflationary GDP growth would top 6% during Reagan's re-election drive. The landscape looked inviting. Few GOP officeholders were likely to be thrown out of office, with the business cycle finally in a fortuitous phase.

"And what Newt did," remembers Bob Walker, "was invite in some futurists, and among them was Al Toffler. John Naisbitt [author of *Megatrends*] also came in, and probably some others. What they did for us is frame where the world was going. Most of us bought in, for instance, to the Toffler belief that we were moving into some sort of intellectual economy, some sort of information economy. And this in turn helped us frame the issues that we took up."

From 1970 to today, Al Toffler has won hundreds of thousands of admirers, in dozens of countries. Jack Pitney has no problem seeing why Gingrich sought Toffler out four decades ago: "The Toffler connection is worth some attention. The books are fascinating to read, but unsystematic flights of fancy relying on speculation more than evidence. 'Futurism' is a lot like Robert Frost's definition of free verse:

Playing tennis without a net." Tennis without a net is like soccer without goal posts and movement by kicking around the metrics -- a refreshing reduction in focus?

In keeping with Gingrich's penchant for things that could be defined as objective trends rather than derided as dogma, didn't he seek issues or at least themes that were not "ideological," but rather presentable to swing voters as the recognition of emerging realities? "Yes, new realities," confirms Bob Walker:

We were in a world where realities were about to change in a major way; we would not have the same economic circumstances; and therefore [federal policy] had to be on the side of growth economics. Toffler helped us frame what "conservative" meant in light of this, what "opportunity" meant in light of this, and what the society that we hoped to create was going to look like. We could walk down to the Floor and engage without a lot of prepared material -- because we had, fundamentally, decided that we were the harbingers of a changed world.

Looking back at 1983-84 a decade later, Gingrich will concede to Mort Kondracke that "it was a little bit presumptuous to be routinely giving advice to the President of the United States. Not that that stopped me -- but I was always aware of how implausible it was. What Reagan did that was the most important thing historically was he re-established the value of being an American in all the bourgeois meaning of that word. And the greatest failure of all of us around him was how to take that cultural re-establishment, and drive it home immediately. And say 'if that's true, that means this...'"

Even so, it's a good thing -- for Reagan, and for his House Republican backers -- that the business cycle catches up with their optimistic language by delivering a drop in joblessness from 11% in late '82 to below 7.6% just two years later.

Or is it? The bracing return of U.S. prosperity -- without war and without bringing back inflation -- turns the minds of the Reagan operatives to mush. Campaign manager Ed Rollins, chief of staff James Baker, pollster Richard Wirthlin and the rest ride the business cycle with a feel-good and nearly vacuous campaign. The January '84 State of the Union declares: "America is back." The Fall campaign speeches of the President end with "You ain't seen nothin' yet."

And that's correct -- in an ironical way: Republicans and swing voters are being shown nothing. A 49-state landslide does nothing to prepare the country for a vigorous second Reagan term. Gingrich's indictment, delivered with trademark scorn and overstatement, is valid: "What his advisors did is they drew a deliberate disjoint between the values of his language and the policies of his government;

and they did it deliberately because they thought it was their job to sell out to the traditional establishment, and to spend his popularity running the traditional machine... That's why Stockman's book is so cynical."

The reference is to the ex-Budget Director's 1986 book, an acidic and self-righteous memoir entitled *The Triumph of Politics*. As if Mr. Stockman thought he was in some other field of endeavor? "Stockman in the end wasn't a revolutionary," Gingrich said of his one-time House comrade: "He didn't have the guts to go out and change the game."

It's because Gingrich lacks cynicism that he can "change games." Cynicism is poison to a politicized innovator, because it works against expanding the coalition. Cynics rarely summon armies, and they never sketch a Promised Land. (Recruitment can hardly occur, at least it can't *en masse*, when expectations are being lowered.)

Granted, some of Gingrich's post-COS actions -- for example, accepting large sums of money from publishers, or from a GSE; or embracing global warming because the polls confirm enviro-motionalism -- strike the cynics as cynical. They think they are seeing their own worldly ways in Gingrich. But this is wrong. Because he first convinces himself that the purpose is noble, and the means are at least not illegal, he can defend his conduct resolutely -- and with a sincerity that shocks debunkers while retaining many of the doubters for the next contest or project.

Gingrich draws energy from a process akin to self-mesmerization. Not that he hypnotizes himself, but the visions materialize and he has faith in them.

And the cynics who watch all of this play out -- who assume they are wise to him -- are like Churchill wanting to tell Gandhi to suspend the pose, and go jump in the lake. Churchill, in that case, was flummoxed by not perceiving the sort of mesmerization that is 10 times more sincere and intuitive than it is mechanical.

A long-time Gingrich-watcher proposed the appropriate 2012 bumper sticker: SOMETIMES IN ERROR, BUT NEVER IN DOUBT. When he does concede a mistake, it's typically done emphatically if tersely. Any phase of doubting -- anything that resembles self-awareness -- is not displayed in public; even in private, it wouldn't last long. Fifty-fifty and "on the fence" is no formula for a Relentless Innovator, who prefers that the level of certitude be at least four-to-one -- in either direction.

Why the Gingrich skills and m.o., including the historical citations, are so valuable to his colleagues, right up to the time he becomes Speaker, is picked up again in later chapters. But 1983 confirms the completion of the first phase. Pure adhococracy by the lone wolf is over. Back to the Future.

(12) Chief Marketing Officer for House GOP Ink

Gingrich is working with Tennessee Congressman Al Gore to expand the Congressional Clearinghouse on the Future. His collaboration with conservative movement pioneer and fellow strategist Paul Weyrich is solid. He is able to tap into the polling expertise of both Bob Teeter and Richard Wirthlin, who between them cover the centrist and conservative wings of the GOP nicely.

All of that at the start of the man's third congressional term!

And he is getting wary if dependable help from more than half of the elected House GOP Leadership -- Trent Lott the Whip, Jack Kemp the Conference chair, Dick Cheney the Policy chair, and of course Guy Vander Jagt, who will end up running the National Republican Congressional Committee -- the House GOP's campaign arm -- from 1975 all the way to 1992.

By March of '83, Gingrich could dictate and circulate these words to his D.C. staff:

My mission from now until November of 1984 is to communicate the concept of a Conservative Opportunity Society (COS), contrast it with a Liberal Welfare State (LWS), focus upon the Democrats the burden of bearing the weight of the LWS and of their more absurd allies, develop a system that tactically outmaneuvers [adversaries], and disseminate these ideas in such a way that our allies as they walk in here get recruited.

"Idea-dissemination" is fundamental to Newt Gingrich, no matter what era you are chronicling him in. Even in 1983 he has become the House GOP's best coach -- if you like sports analogies -- or, the one I prefer having studied dozens of U.S. companies -- its CMO: Chief Marketing Officer. And the memo climaxes with the closest thing one sees to a Gingrich request for long-term help:

I just want you to know [all this] because it gets frustrating and you are essentially riding a wild horse. You can't figure out where the railroad's going 'cause there ain't no railroad. But we can figure out how to be awesomely effective at not losing people, at managing the flow of ideas, at scheduling behavior...and in the process we have invented a generation's worth of legislation, we've written a Republican platform people can rally around, we've imposed the concept of a language pattern, and we've built an alliance system up here [in Washington] which lasts for generations. I've only got 18 months to do that....

A Gingrich sympathizer from the office of Eldon Rudd (R-AZ) is shown that March 1983 text and says "you better not let anyone in Georgia get a hold of this." And the dictated memo ends on a note of upbeat exhaustion: "I can't do it by myself. Y'all now have to sort out what that means. I had to get it out of my system."

He did, they can't, and Gingrich realizes the pressure to perform must be radiated out to operatives who can raise their own resources. The COS -- specifically, three different weekly meetings whenever the House is in session -- supplies operational firepower, and just enough fine-tuning. Gingrich has top-notch poll data; popular new language that facilitates productive polarization; a willingness to go where the Reagan operatives don't desire to tread; and the self-confidence that his one to two dozen allies inside the House are bolstering.

Though holding a congressional seat and being nominally in the "business" of legislation, Newt Gingrich is actually the GOP's Chief Marketeer. Marketing is a more flexible form of politics -- full of issues, but weak on principles -- and legislation drops down to the level of tactics and tools. He tells Kondracke in December 1993: "This is a pro-death penalty, pro-balanced budget, pro-military strength, pro-locking up criminals, pro-work ethic country -- I mean, I don't have any question where the values that base this culture are -- which is where the greatest part of my strength comes from. I represent the necessity of survival for our civilization, and I represent the values of a vast majority of Americans."

There you have the self-image that governs the Gingrich approach to public policy: The polling -- the language adjustments -- aggressive experimentation -- Congress as a good-sized R&D lab (chock full of your partisan-corporate rivals, to make the product-testing more rigorous) -- and a related "issue re-mix" that will never quit.

One of the most effective and well-liked of the 1980 freshmen, Denny Smith of Oregon, will recollect 30 years later:

SMITH: My history with Newt -- he was one of those guys you couldn't quite rely on.

GREGORSKY: Can you give an example?

SMITH: We started this project in '81, but all during 1982 I was pushing a freeze for the entire federal budget, at the present level of spending, except for [higher domestic outlays driven by] demographics.

GREGORSKY: That's right! With Senator Grassley.

SMITH: Yeah, that's right!

GREGORSKY: But a budget freeze in '82 would've stopped most of the Reagan-Weinberger defense buildup.

SMITH: That's true, but the point here is about Newt. He jumped on the freeze.

GREGORSKY: And I think the interest there lasted perhaps four months.

SMITH: Exactly. I liked Newt, but --

GREGORSKY: He had a brainstorm every three hours.

SMITH: And [good-naturedly] some of 'em were brain farts; but, in any event -- he was an interesting character. Still is!

Smith added: "And I voted for Gingrich [in March 1989] when he ran for Whip -- he had kind of 'matured' by then." Other former colleagues tell this writer as much. Except for the tax-hike party schism of June to October 1990 -- one of the most misunderstood sequences in Republican history (and slated for its own chapter) -- Newt Gingrich was an effective and trusted House GOP Whip.

And that's especially impressive considering that he had to take weekly guidance from the likes of President George H.W. Bush and GOP Leader Michel. He often chafed at having to work with, and around, those two G.I. generation stalwarts. Yet from 1989 into '94 is the one time in his career that Gingrich is part of a leadership hierarchy -- near the top but in no way calling the shots. In that structure, he enjoys some autonomy, but can't generate huge blunders as either the Top Dog or the swashbuckling backbencher.

(13) "I represent the necessity of survival for our civilization"

Is it possible to stick with a man who traffics in futurism, policy creativity and strategic lunges yet is associated with no two or three clear principles or goals? Thirty years ago his peers evolved their way into an answer of "Yes" to that question. Today the same question is asked (in sloppier ways) regarding his claim to be presidential.

Just as a master business marketer relies on focus groups and survey research to head off a sharp plunge in revenues, Gingrich as a partisan marketer never wants to be alienated from a major trend. This is why he does things that exasperate admirers who have a philosophical grounding.

In 2008, with 85% of Americans wanting something done about global warming, Gingrich sits down on a couch with Speaker Nancy Pelosi and says "our country must take action to address climate change." In October 2011, a year after U.K.

scientists are shown to have cooked the data, and now in need of GOP primary support, he tells Fox News that the collaboration with Speaker Pelosi is “probably the dumbest single thing I’ve done in recent years. It is inexplicable.”

He then proceeds to explicate it. To Stephen Hayes on Fox-TV, Gingrich says: “I do think it’s important for conservatives to be in the middle of the debate over the environment” -- then comes a plug for another of his books, *Contract With the Earth* -- followed by: “I actually don’t know whether global warming is occurring. The vast majority of the National Academy of Science says it is. A minority says it is not. Science is not actually voted on; science is a function of truth. What I do know is, if you look at exactly what is said in that ad, finding innovative new ways of getting cleaner energy ought to be something most Americans feel pretty comfortable with.”

With that, the master marketer is back on safe ground. He does not wish to get too far from where “most” Americans are. And when Democrats and Independents are far away from where “most” Republicans are, he will wander away from the GOP orthodoxy -- but use his marketing and professorial modes to come back in the nick of time. An entire Ph.D. thesis could be built on this lifelong mode of his.

In the weeks up to the 2012 Iowa caucuses, Gingrich kept getting asked about the commercial with Pelosi. This turned out to be a blessing, because he became comfortable trashing the image -- he came out emphatically against “sitting on the couch with Pelosi” (friendly chuckles from audience). In fact the real problem with that PSA, and even more so in the joint appearance with leftwing Senator John Kerry in 2007, is that Gingrich gave away the store to get right with the polls.

This whole paragraph comes from the *National Review* cover story, issue of December 31, 2001, written by the relentlessly innovative satirist Mark Steyn:

In 2007 John Kerry found himself booked for a debate with Gingrich on climate change and had his speechwriters prepare some boilerplate about Newt’s “marching in lockstep with the climate-change deniers.” Unfortunately for him, the former Speaker spoke first and announced that man-made global warming was a real threat that we needed to address “very actively.” He praised as “a very interesting read” Kerry’s unreadable book on the subject, and for good measure added that he was “very worried about polar bears” because “my name ‘Newt’ actually comes from the Danish ‘Knut,’ and there’s been a major crisis in Germany over a polar bear named ‘Knut.’” Kerry abandoned his prescribed attack on Gingrich, hailed his candor, and put his arm around him. Lest the paying customers feel cheated by the bipartisan love-in, the Senator attempted to put a bit of clear blue water between him and the ruthless right-wing bastard by raising the possibility that perhaps Gingrich did not share his enthusiasm for cap-and-trade. Newt said he was willing to be persuaded. “I am going to sell a few more books for you, John,” he declared.

On the stage with Kerry one sees the fluid core of Newt Gingrich: Never stand athwart a huge majority; and, where possible, enable more of the audience to love you. The idea of Ronald Reagan or Margaret Thatcher doing a craven hoop-jump with such glee is fanciful. (They had to cave on policy here and there, but made plain it was turning their stomach.) Five years after Kerry, Gingrich is happy to have his embarrassment limited to “sitting on a couch with Pelosi.” *Friendly laughter.*

Back to the question that commenced this final segment: Is it possible to stick with a man who traffics in futurism and policy creativity yet is associated with no two or three clear principles or goals?

I put that question to Pitney, who prior to his academic berth at Claremont McKenna was a House policy analyst. His paper to the 1996 APSA convention (entitled “Understanding Newt Gingrich” -- see the References list) remains the best summary of Newt’s intellectual and policy history. Pitney boiled my riddle down to “Why are there no Newt Gingrich Republicans.” Okay -- and? It’s because “people who know him through his public appearances are reacting less to the content of what he says than the fluency with which he says it. There is no real coherent philosophy for them to retain once he has left the podium.”

So what is Newt Gingrich committed to? What might you “rely” on him for?

Here it is: A “model of leadership” where most any kind of change -- policy tweak each week, and occasionally rupture *a la* Kerry 2007 -- can be justifiable. Though articulate and aggressive when asked about this or that issue, Gingrich reserves latitude -- to move toward what he sees or senses as more popular, while moving away from the political downsides he fears or can validate with poll data.

No national figure has ever sounded more declarative while knowing -- sensing -- that half of “the plan” might fall apart next week if his intuition tells him to dump it.

The result is declarations that sound bold while confirming no philosophical roots: “I represent the necessity of survival for our civilization, and I represent the values of a vast majority of Americans.” Those are two sides of the same Newtonian coin -- easy to flip, impossible to separate. Without a poll-verified majority behind him, Newt Gingrich comes up with reasons not to move. When the majority is against him on this or that issue, he will pivot to another issue.

As Gingrich told the D.C. staff in 1983, “I would never vote against my conscience. On the other hand, I also make it a habit to have relatively few things I feel bitterly moral about.” I always saw the insertion of “bitterly” as significant. He’ll withstand heat for short periods based on some extreme classroom-type of statement he just

made; but he won't put up with it -- won't withstand political heat -- for months at a time on behalf of a principled issue stance. Or, because he has so few of these to begin with, situations of having to defy large majorities are just plain rare.

All of which frees Gingrich, as a poll-driven political marketer, to give each crowd at least some of what it wants. He is compelled to jazz, or at least appease, whomever is in front of him -- ideally to close that day's sale, and at a minimum to get off the hot seat; change the subject; and redirect the negativism to some unpopular group.

Rather than defy crowds, he works to lead them (or attract them where they don't exist); and he exists -- even when nothing else is working -- to give them new perspectives. That is the fun of the whole grind, the reason he puts on a face and takes part in the race. Alvin Toffler would understand, as would Carl Jung, and the pros who administer those "MBTI" tests. So would today's mind-blowing professors. So would the sharpest marketing tacticians inside Apple, Ford or Coca-Cola.

Republicans -- 30 years ago, 15 years ago, and today -- make all manner of partial, transitory and rolling assessments on their way to discerning "what manner of man." Finding the answer is not nearly as confusing as they think.

RELENTLESS -- "showing or promising no abatement of severity, intensity, or pace." **INNOVATOR** -- one who exists "to introduce as, or as if, new."
Source: *The Merriam Webster Dictionary*, 2004 paperback edition.

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NOTE: AEI senior editor Laura Drinkwine wrote me on June 20, 2011: "The American Enterprise Institute (AEI) hereby grants permission to use excerpts of quotations from 'Revitalizing America: What Are the Possibilities?' -- a transcript of an AEI forum held December 9, 1980 -- in your history of the House Republican Party. Please provide citations to the source material, according to your publisher's guidelines, wherever quoted in your book."

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Steyn, Mark. "The Gingrich Gestalt," *National Review*: December 31, 2011, pages 26-30. "When Churchill was forced from the Admiralty in 1915, he went on to serve with the Sixth Battalion, the Royal Scots Fusiliers on the Western Front. By contrast, when he was forced from the Speakership, Newt stayed in Washington working his Rolodex. These are different times, but even so the Freddie Mac business is not a small thing. Perhaps the single most repellent feature of the political class that has served America so disastrously in recent decades is its shameless venality in parlaying 'public service' into a guarantee of an eternal snout at the trough. Newt writes best-selling books about government, produces DVDs about government, sets up websites about government -- but he is as foreign to genuine private-sector wealth-creation as any life politician. Indeed, his endurance in Washington represents one of the worst aspects of contemporary 'public service' -- that a life in politics no longer depends on anything so whimsical as the votes of the people."

Stolberg, Sheryl Gay. "For Gingrich in Power, Pragmatism, Not Purity," *The New York Times*: December 20, 2011. "Today as he seeks the Republican nomination for President, Mr. Gingrich, 68, remains a paradoxical figure for conservatives to embrace... Many credit him with advancing their cause, yet many are deeply suspicious of him." From a 1996 PBS broadcast, Stolberg quotes the movement-builder who worked intensely and productively with Gingrich throughout the 1980s: "I call Newt an experiential conservative, as opposed to a deeply philosophical conservative," said Paul Weyrich. "He does not have a deeply held philosophy -- say, Biblically-based philosophy -- as some of us do."

Walker, Robert S. "[Gingrich is the President America Needs](#)," *USA Today*: December 1, 2011. "Newt led Republicans to their first congressional majority in 40 years. His Contract With America led us to balanced budgets, debt-reduction, welfare reform and 7.5 million jobs. By negotiating with a Democratic president, he attained conservative goals and unprecedented prosperity... Newt acknowledges his imperfections and has sought forgiveness. He has discovered the joy of a strong marriage to Callista. While he is reflective befitting his role as a grandfather, he maintains his enthusiasm for innovation and his excitement about new ideas and new frontiers."

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