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As Winston Churchill understood, democracy is messy (and, as in his case, sometimes ungrateful). Glenn Beck is no William F. Buckley Jr. But then, "Joe the Plumber" probably never read National Review, which like most other journals of "high opinion" was never self-sustaining. Liberals today, their noses in the air Obama style, look across America from the vantage of the famous New Yorker cover and see pitchfork brigades, forgetting that those who fill the brigades generally love America, which is more than can be said of some of the baggage that has surrounded Obama.

There is a problem in the Republican Party, to be sure. Nominally the party of limited constitutional government, it recently gave us two presidents from the same family -- one standing for a "kinder and gentler" government, the other for "compassionate conservatism" -- plus a career Senate nominee for president, none of whom ever really understood the party's core principles, much less nourished them as they must be nourished from generation to generation. As a result, **the party has been hollowed out intellectually and spiritually, and into that vacuum, which nature abhors, has poured an assortment of people, most from outside the party.**

The struggle in democracies between intellectual rigor and populism is as old as that between Socrates and the sophists. We all know the dangers of populist demagoguery. But there is also great danger in rule by élites, which are hardly immune from demagoguery and outright fraud (witness [the "accounting"](#) in the current healthcare debate). Achieving that balance is often difficult and messy. But I for one am encouraged by this populist movement to reform the Republican Party. I know, for example, that at the Orlando rally [The New York Times](#) referenced this past Saturday, people passed out copies of the Cato Institute's pocket Constitution, which includes the Declaration of Independence and my preface relating the two documents with respect to their underlying principles. The people who attended the April 15 tea parties and the September 12 march on Washington were ordinary Americans who understand that something is fundamentally wrong, constitutionally, with the direction the country has taken over the past two decades, at least. They see the Republican Party, in our two-party system, as the more likely institution for changing that, but not as the party is presently constituted. Still, there are people within the party who give hope and are ready to take over. Populists working outside the party, together with those of us who do "politics" (broadly understood) for a living, may just be the spark that enables that to happen.