

THE HOUSE GOP IS NOT PINING FOR THE FJORDS



House GOP Caucus meeting, October 20, 2023

Jordain Carney, Olivia Beavers and Sarah Ferris have a good rundown in Politico of today's breakdown of the Republican party in the House of Representatives. Two bits leapt out at me. First, buried at the bottom of their column, was this:

In all, 122 Republicans voted to boot Jordan as their party's nominee, while 86 said he should remain their choice, according to two people familiar with the private discussions. Five members voted present.

Note that this was a secret ballot, so while the public vote of the House showed only a couple of dozen votes against Jordan, a secret ballot proved Jordan could no longer get anywhere close to a majority of the House GOP caucus. Not even close.

The second bit was this, much higher in the piece:

Lawmakers now plan to leave Washington for the weekend as the next round of ambitious Republicans decide whether to mount their own speaker bids.

But most Republicans acknowledge that even with new faces to consider, they still have no clear path to uniting their splintered conference. They have already rejected two speaker candidates – Jordan and House Majority Leader Steve Scalise – as well as former Speaker Kevin McCarthy during this month alone.

Ponder those names for a moment . . .

McCarthy, the former speaker. Scalise, the former Majority Leader. Jordan, the founder of the Freedom Caucus and current Judiciary chair. Those are the #1, #2, and #2a members of the GOP leadership. And they – like the rest of the membership of the GOP caucus – do not like each other, and do not trust each other.

Welcome to life in a multi-party House, where the largest party does not have a majority, and the two other parties are too busy fighting over the name “Republican” for their caucus to get anything done, like selecting their own leader. The House is no longer a place where a majority rules, because there is no majority.

Germany understands this situation, as they’ve lived with it for decades. The conservative Christian Democratic Union (with their regional partners in Bavaria, the even more conservative Christian Socialist Union) [CDU/CSU] and the more liberal Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) are the two historically main parties, with a mix of minor parties alongside them including the Greens, The Left (former East German communists and disaffected SPDers), the business-friendly Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the walking-right-up-to-the-line-with-the-Nazis Alternative for Germany (AfD). Both in the federal government and the various states, governing is usually the work of a coalition, often led by the CDU/CSU or the SPD and filled in with a coalition partner or two.

But there’s one thing more the Germans could teach the folks in the House: despite growing

electoral support for the far-right AfD, no other parties will include them in a coalition. Yes, adding them to a coalition could put your leader in power, but the cost of aligning you and your party with racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, hatred of the EU, and historical revisionism is much too much for the leaders of the other parties. This has resulted in some incredible coalitions that one would never expect to see, but the alternative was an unthinkable coalition with AfD.

Which brings us to what's been going on with the GOP in the House. McCarthy and others made their coalition with Jordan, Gaetz, and the far-right AfD-like folks, thinking they could blunt their harder edges and rougher policies. Note, though, that it took 15 ballots in January to get the far-right to contribute their votes. Finally, the far-right made their coalition with McCarthy, thinking they could roll him with their strong appeal among the base of the party. In the past month, Gaetz et al. decided that the price of the coalition was too much, and pulled the pin on the grenade he was holding within the caucus.

And today, the grenade went off. To borrow from John Cleese . . .

It's not pining for the fjords! It's passed on! This party is no more! It has ceased to be! It's expired and gone to meet its maker!

It's a stiff! Bereft of life, it rests in peace! If you hadn't nailed it to the perch it'd be pushing up the daisies!

It's metabolic processes are now history! It's off the twig!

It's kicked the bucket, it's shuffled off this mortal coil, rung down the curtain and joined the bleeding choir invisible!!

THIS IS AN EX-PARTY!!

That's what none of the folks in the Republican caucus want to admit in public. Their's is an ex-party.

What is left in the House is Democratic party with a strong plurality of votes, and two smaller parties fighting over the rest. I don't know what you would label these two small parties, I don't know how many votes each group wields in the House, but I know this: they are two separate parties.

So one of two things has to happen. Either the two small parties will get together again – something that is increasingly unlikely – or the non-Jordan/Gaetz group will come to an agreement with the Democrats for a coalition to run the House. If it is the former, it is quite likely to be a very temporary arrangement, and we'll be right back here again in short order.

I don't know how long it will take to arrange a coalition between the Dems and the not-so-far-right of the former GOP. I don't know what the terms of the coalition will be. (See [here](#) for a description of the 177 page document outlining the terms of a 2018 CDU/SPD coalition that took six months to hammer out.) I don't know who will hold the gavels in the House and the various committees.

But I do know this: the House GOP has joined the choir invisible.