

Run, Fred, run

by Cal_Thomas

I have no idea whether Fred Thompson, former senator from Tennessee, will run for the Republican nomination for president, but he should. He has Ronald Reagan's communication skills and speaks plainly in ways most people can understand. Anyone who has listened to him substitute for Paul Harvey on ABC News Radio senses that, in this, he follows in Reagan's footsteps. Radio is an intimate medium. People who are able to connect with a radio audience often can connect on TV and in person. Thompson, the actor, plays other people. On radio and in news interviews, he "plays" himself. Fred Thompson conveys Middle American, common sense values. When he is asked a question, he doesn't sound as if he's giving a poll-tested pabulum answer. Agree or not, his statements spring from conviction. In an interview with Fox's Chris Wallace last month, Thompson gave refreshingly direct answers to questions. On Iraq: "We're the leader of the free world whether we like it or not. People are looking to us to test our resolve. . . People think that if we hadn't gone down there (to Iraq), things would have been lovely. . . If Saddam Hussein were still around today with his sons looking at Iran developing a nuclear capability, he undoubtedly would have reconstituted his nuclear capability. Things would be worse than they are today." "Yes, we made mistakes in Iraq, Thompson says. "We went in there too light, wrong rules of engagement, wrong strategy, placed too much emphasis on just holding things in place while we built up the Iraqi army, took longer than we figured. Wars are full of mistakes. You rectify things. I think we're doing that now." "Abortion? "Pro-life. . . I think Roe vs. Wade was bad law and bad medical science. And the way to address that is through good judges." "Gay rights? "I think that we ought to be a tolerant nation. I think we ought to be tolerant people. But we shouldn't set up special categories for anybody. . . Marriage is between a man and a woman and I don't believe judges ought to come along and change that." "As for "civil unions," Thompson thinks it should be left up to the states. Gun control? Thompson is "against it generally." Thompson is a member of the advisory committee for the Libby Legal Defense Trust, which supports Dick Cheney's former chief of staff who is appealing his perjury conviction. Thompson told Wallace if he were president he would pardon Libby immediately: "This is a trial that never would have been brought in any other part of the world. This is a miscarriage of justice." There's something else to like about Fred Thompson. He doesn't appear to be lusting after the job as if he needs it for his self-image. This, too, is much like Reagan, who knew who he was before becoming president and was the same after he left office. It is said of Thompson that he has always "answered the call" of his country, whether it was serving as minority counsel to the Senate Watergate Committee, or in other capacities, including United States senator. Some political "experts" think it is almost too late for any new candidate to announce for president. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich says he intends to wait until September before saying if he will run. Actually, waiting might be the best strategy for these Republicans. Conservative Republicans are restless about what they regard as a weak field. They want someone who can take on Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama and win. Thompson thinks he can afford to wait until he again hears "the call." In being coy and demonstrating patience, he is following the advice of poet John Keats, who wrote: "Fame, like a wayward girl, will still be coy To those who woo her with too slavish knees, But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy, And dotes the more upon a heart at ease. Make your best bow to her and bid adieu, Then, if she likes it, she will follow you." Fame and the presidency may be about to follow Fred Thompson. That would be good for the Republican Party and, should he win, good for the country. (c) 2007 Tribune Media Services, Inc.

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