

Live Free or Die?

Many of the results from New Hampshire were surprising, but none was as disappointing as Ron Paul's fifth place showing. Coming off a decent 10-percent finish in

Iowa, where no one had expected Paul to do well, the campaign seemed poised to strike gold in a state filled with independent-minded, libertarian-leaning voters. Columnist Jim Pinkerton even hazarded a guess that Paul might win New Hampshire. Instead, he received just 8 percent of the vote.

In the end, Iowa rewarded the campaigns staffed by zealous activists, and New Hampshire punished those lacking careful preparation and professionalism. Where Paul won more votes with less effort and expenditure in Iowa than almost any other candidate, no other campaign missed a greater opportunity in the Granite State. In what should have been his natural constituency, Paul lagged behind every other competitive contender and was outpolled by the candidates for the nanny state (Huckabee) and the warfare state (Giuliani). Now Paul's grassroots rebellion seems stalled, flush with cash but bereft of electoral prospects.

Optimistic theories that pollsters were missing a mass of first-time voters turned out to be false. Instead, the home of the Free State Project and the birthplace of the "Constitutional President" opted for neither liberty nor the Constitution.

Some factors were frankly beyond the campaign's control. In a record-turnout primary, the impact of dissenting candidates in both parties was reduced. Two top-tier candidates attracted most of the independent voters in New Hampshire's open system, so there was more competition for these unaffiliated voters than

there had been in other cycles. Most frustrating for an antiwar conservative candidate, Paul only received the votes of 16 percent of those who disapproved of the war in Iraq, while a large number inexplicably went to John McCain, the most ardent advocate of the surge and a leading apologist for the disastrous war. In fact, four in ten McCain supporters had a favorable view of Ron Paul.

Where the other notable rebellious Republican candidate, Mike Huckabee, was able to tap into pre-existing networks of churches and homeschoolers to make up for his lack of organization and money, there are few ready-made support systems for antiwar constitutionalists. The idiosyncratic nature of Paul's campaign makes it an odd fit for most institutions and interest groups. Finally, FoxNews excluded Paul from its final debate on the Sunday before the election, which may have undermined his position among late-deciding voters.

This explains only so much. Paul's campaign infrastructure was poor, confirming the suspicion that a candidate who was an Internet sensation might not have the "ground game" needed to persuade and mobilize voters in a state famous for its tradition of retail politics. As *Reason's* Dave Weigel reported, Paul volunteers were late in coming to the state, and once there were slow to become effective campaigners. And in addition to a scatter-shot ad campaign, some of the Paul commercials were famously awful and amateurish. "Ron Paul, he's really catching on," a character in one ad asserted, as if he was

trying to convince himself as much as the audience.

The outlook for the campaign in the rest of the primary season is not encouraging. Paul won only 6 percent in Michigan, and polls just 5 percent in South Carolina. In state after state, he has some of the most unfavorable ratings of any Republican. While this is undoubtedly caused by relentless demonization in the Republican media, it also reflects the divide between roughly two-thirds of the party and Ron Paul on the war and foreign policy generally.

Still the campaign has the potential to be the start of a movement rather than an enthusiastic fad. Its mix of constitutionalism and cultural conservatism with hints of Jeffersonian populism is a powerful, appealing combination. It speaks to the 10-15 percent of Americans on the Right who are clamoring for representation, in addition to many more who have little confidence in our political system and have only recently learned of Paul's principles. In a hopeful sign for the future, Paul's support in New Hampshire, as in Iowa, came disproportionately from voters aged 18-29, among whom he finished third. In a generation that is turning away from the Republican Party in droves, Paul voters are among the young Americans moved in the other direction by a message of constitutional liberty. The principles of the Old Right are new again.

As a president from New Hampshire said in his Inaugural Address, "The great objects of our pursuit as a people are best to be attained by peace, and are entirely consistent with the tranquility and interests of the rest of mankind." As long as there are Americans who believe this, the Ron Paul Revolution will live on beyond 2008. ■

Arts & Letters

FILM

[*There Will Be Blood*]

The Oilman Bowls Alone

By Steve Sailer

NO MOVIE OF 2007 sounded more promising than “There Will Be Blood,” which stars the titanic Daniel Day-Lewis in a loose adaptation of Upton Sinclair’s 1927 *roman-à-clef* about prospector Edward L. Doheny, *Oil!*

In 1893, Doheny sank the first oil well in Los Angeles, digging 155 feet by hand. His oil discoveries all over California and Mexico (where he employed a private army of 6,000), enabled him to give his son the most imposing house in California south of William Randolph Hearst’s San Simeon Greystone, a 55-room Beverly Hills mansion with a private bowling alley, where the last scene of “There Will Be Blood” was filmed.

During the Harding administration, however, Doheny, a Democrat (but an open-minded one), became entangled in the Teapot Dome scandal. After receiving a no-bid contract to drill on Navy lands, he sent his son with a “loan” of \$100,000 in cash to Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall.

Outraged, the muckraking socialist Sinclair wrote a verbose but well-researched novel about oil, “the black and cruel demon,” leavened with some surprisingly affectionate depictions of the old rascal. If Sinclair had waited two more years, though, he would have had

the perfect climax. In 1929, having been acquitted of conspiracy, Doheny was still facing trial on bribing Fall when his son and his son’s secretary, both potential witnesses, died at Greystone in a murder-suicide. Who had murdered whom? The police quickly blamed the secretary, and the newspapers went along.

The Doheny affair was not forgotten, however, by a Los Angeles oil industry executive named Raymond Chandler. When he drank himself out of a job in 1932, Chandler tried writing detective fiction. The ambiguous Greystone killings became the archetype for Philip Marlowe’s cases, with Doheny Sr. perhaps the inspiration for the dying General Sternwood who hires Marlowe in *The Big Sleep*.

It would be hard to go wrong with source material this vivid, and harder still with Daniel Day-Lewis as the oilman. This is only the eighth movie Day-Lewis has appeared in since he won the 1989 Best Actor Oscar for “My Left Foot.” There he played an angry Irish slum lad so disabled by cerebral palsy that he couldn’t speak, who became a famous painter and writer using the only part of his body he could control.

Day-Lewis claims he felt like a discriminated-against outsider growing up in England because of his half-Irish and half-Jewish ancestry. In reality, his Protestant Irish father, C. Day-Lewis, was Poet Laureate of England, while his Jewish grandfather, Sir Michael Balcon, was the head of England’s most beloved movie studio, Ealing, when Alec Guinness made his comedies. Day-Lewis’s combination of English privileged-class panache and American method-acting intensity has made him one of the most formidable of all contemporary screen presences.

And in the hands of the Bard of Studio City, writer-director Paul Thomas Anderson, maker of such memorable San Fernando Valley-obsessed films as “Boogie Nights” and “Punch-Drunk Love,” “There Will Be Blood” had the potential to displace “Chinatown” as the Southern California period masterpiece.

Despite a handful of great scenes, the strangely apolitical “There Will Be Blood” turns out to be just another movie about movies. Anderson entrances the critics with countless references to film-school staples such as “Citizen Kane.” For example, Day-Lewis’s mid-Atlantic accent is lifted from John Huston’s villainous tycoon in “Chinatown,” which in turn points to Huston’s classic about greedy prospectors, “Treasure of the Sierra Madre.” The ominous, annoying orchestral score by Radiohead guitarist Johnny Greenwood is nearly identical to György Ligeti’s buzzing insect music used by Stanley Kubrick in “2001.” Indeed, by the (perhaps intentionally) comic conclusion, the oilman has devolved into “2001’s” ape-man, clubbing his rival’s head in, although with a bowling pin rather than a bone.

Regrettably, there’s not enough to entertain the non-cinephile during the abstract, glum, and static first two hours. Have you ever had that nightmare where you are back in college on final exam day, but you haven’t read a word all semester? I wonder if Anderson similarly woke up and realized he had made 120 minutes of a movie starring the world’s greatest actor but had barely given him anything to do. Whatever the explanation, the last 40 minutes consist of Day-Lewis overacting shamelessly. It’s silly, but at least it’s lively. ■

Rated a soft R, mostly for art house cred.