

Strange Bedfellows

By Mel Lavine

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News Item: Newt Gingrich met secretly with Mitt Romney on March 24 on the eve of the Louisiana primary.

Was the former House speaker dropping out? Gingrich told the Washington Times he did not make a deal with Mitt to quit the race. He was in for the duration despite many primary losses. Meanwhile, we've learned that Sheldon Adelson, Newt's benefactor, the casino magnet, is writing no more checks and that a third of the people on Newt's payroll have been let go.

Although Gingrich insisted Romney did not offer to help him with campaign debts or a job in any administration in return for leaving the race, and vowed to fight on to Tampa, you have to wonder.

And although Rick Santorum was behind Romney by a wide margin in delegates before Tuesday's primaries, 554 to 241, he kept the heat on. (The votes of 1,144 delegates are needed to lock up the presidential nomination.) Santorum had argued there were no policy differences between President Obama and Romney. He called Romney the "worst Republican" to run against the president.

And yet going into primaries in Wisconsin, Maryland and the District of Columbia, where Romney was favored in all three contests, Santorum seemed to lower the temperature. "If Gov. Romney gets that required number (1,144 on the way to the convention), then without doubt, if he's at that number, we'll step aside," he said Sunday on "Meet the Press." But then added, "Right now, he's not there. He's not even close to it."

Given Santorum's unpromising prospects to overtake Romney before Tampa and with a number of Republican leaders calling on him to end his primary bid so the party can focus on defeating Obama, you have to wonder.

I've been wondering, too. Santorum and Gingrich may need a job. And as many of us know this is a bad time to go looking for one. You can see where Mitt would be open to help. He needs a

united party, moderates, Tea Party, the very conservative, Republicans all.

It's no stretch to imagine Gingrich applying for secretary of state given the high opinion he has of himself. As for Santorum there may be a problem. So far as I know there's no move afoot to establish a department of religion. But there's no reason to suppose Mitt can't rise up to the challenge.

As Charles Dudley Warner, the 19th century editor and essayist said, "True it is that politics makes strange bedfellows."

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