

That Dreadful Election

Editorial

The recent presidential election was a disgrace to the nation and a disgrace to the Democratic Party. Bush won the election on November 7 according to the rules and was properly certified as the winner. Mr. Gore conceded and then changed his mind when it was pointed out to him that there was a method by which he could continue to fight. And fight he did for more than a month.

The change of mind followed a protest that some blacks did not understand the voting process and, therefore, there should be a recount. Sample ballots were given to pupils in a second grade class, and they had no trouble voting correctly—but that was of no importance. The issue had been joined. Jesse Jackson claimed that blacks had been prevented from going to the polls, but this was proved false. No matter, once again, it was repeated that the blacks had been prevented from going to the polls, and this claim is still made. Jesse Jackson portrayed the Republicans as Fascists.

The Florida Supreme Court changed the rules and extended the deadline for counting votes. After an appeal to the United States Supreme Court the Supreme Court of Florida was asked to explain how they justified making a decision that was contrary to the U.S. Constitution. The State Supreme Court ignored the U.S. Supreme Court and reaffirmed its earlier ruling. The U.S. Supreme Court then overruled the State Supreme Court by a margin of 5-4 and thereby made George W. Bush the winner of the election. Happily that ended the disgrace.

Gore's enormously selfish act put the nation to trauma and great expense and severely strained the economy and stock market. It is worth noting also that William Daley, the Gore campaign manager, is the son of Mayor Daley of Chicago, one of the most dishonest politicians in the history of the country. Mayor Daley could be counted on to examine tombstones and add six to eight thousand votes at any time they were needed. That is how Jack Kennedy defeated Richard Nixon. One is not to assume that because the father is dishonest the son is therefore dishonest, but the relationship clouds the son and particularly so when, in discussing the Republican claim that military votes be counted though they lacked postmarks, Mr. Daley said sanctimoniously, "Is it legal?"

The Gore team said that so many votes had not been counted that a recount and extension of the time specified was justified. That was not true, or to put the matter bluntly, was a lie. The votes had been counted and recounted because the difference in numbers between the candidates was small. After two counts, Bush had won the election. The votes that had not been counted, according to Gore, were votes where no preference was made about the presidential candidates, and therefore, by tortured logic, were not completed votes. Witchcraft was introduced.

By an examination of chads, dimples, kisses, and scratches examiners decided that those who did not express a presidential preference really meant to vote for Gore. Not only was this hocus-pocus treated seriously but was limited to precincts where Democrats were a majority. Republicans could have asked for a recount in precincts heavily Republican said the Gore lawyers, but this was not possible because the Republicans correctly said that recounts were illegal. If they had descended to the hocus pocus of the Democrats, they would be acting illegally, neutralizing their position.

There was no alternative to taking the issue to the courts, but this was a further revelation of the divisions of society. The Supreme Court of Florida was blatantly political, but so was the Supreme Court of the United States. Justices make decisions according to their political philosophy rather than by interpreting the exact meaning of the Constitution—on every level, in state and federal courts. This was shown in the U.S. Supreme Court when the decision of the majority was by the “conservatives” who decided by the letter of the law and by “liberals” who regard the U.S. Constitution as a “living document.” Advocates of the “living document” theory believe that they may legalize their political philosophy. If justices are politicians in black robes, they are a threat to traditional society and law is a facade rather than a reality.

The country is divided over this issue. Democrats believe in the “living document” theory of the U.S. Constitution, and any constitution, while Republicans believe the exact meaning of the words of any constitution should guide our actions. The consequence of the position of the Democrats is that any problem, anywhere, can be contested at any place, local or national, politically or judicially, while the position of the Republicans is to restrain action. If the Republicans could act according to their beliefs, a large part of federal action would be either not done or turned over to the states.

So far have we advanced toward centralization, however, and so activist are our courts and legislatures, that local governance has been reduced or preempted. Americans hate the bureaucracy that covers them like a blanket, intruding into every detail of personal and business life, stifling us, reducing our wealth in the pursuit of what supposedly is good for us. But Americans have gotten used to and accept the bureaucracy. Beginning with President Wilson who loved the state, and advanced further by F.D.R. with his war powers and then his New Deal, government grows under Republican and Democratic presidents.

Law and legislation are now the potent force for social change, and they have been effective. Whether they have been effective for good or ill is another matter. Are our morals better than forty years ago? Are good manners the rule? Are we as civil a society as we used to be? We have spent enormous amounts of money for improvement, passed billions of laws, and have enormous, uncontrolled bureaucracies for our benefit, but to what effect?

Until a couple of generations ago, law was local and at the state level, save for interstate commerce, the post office, the coining of money, and national defense. Our morals were formed by the church, family, and local traditions. All of that is

past history, a romantic, nostalgic memory, held in honor by old fogies who do not understand the meaning and the demands of the modern world. I was raised in the British tradition where honor and the tradition of the gentleman were cherished. That has gone in England and, from what I can tell, most of Europe. Japan retains traditions of good manners, not that Japan is without fault, but they are adopting “modern” ways and will probably adopt modern manners.

George W. Bush is the next president of the United States. What are the chances of his success? Because the election was close, Democrats will have equal numbers on committees, which was probably unavoidable if we were not to have a filibuster. Put in simple English, this means the Democrats will have the power to derail every program Bush suggests, render him incompetent, and prepare the way for his defeat in four years.

Mr. Clinton has issued executive orders on a daily basis to derail any effort to solve our energy crisis. He has forbid many million square miles of additional federal lands to have internal roads and has put Alaska out of reach for oil exploration. “What Clinton is trying to do is put the next administration into a regulatory straight-jacket,” said Bill Kovacs, vice president for environmental and regulatory affairs at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. These actions can be reversed, but it is a slow and clumsy process once regulation has been established. Extreme environmentalists have put the pursuit of gas and oil beyond reach because it is “offensive to birds and animals” and may “change the color of the native grasses.” (These are accurate quotes, just as the environmentalists have spoken them.) We have enormous reserves of oil and gas if we develop them, and the prevention of exploration is stupidity. We know that fossil fuels are a resource of limited time, but that limited time remains several hundred years with present availability. Our use of what we have would send a strong message to the Middle East, letting it know we shall not be gouged. We can be independent if we have to be.

A friend has suggested that we should give environmentalists a quick lesson in survival. Give them sleeping bags and as many bows and arrows as they need and dump them for a season or two in Yellowstone Park where there is plenty of game. A few years ago I stood by the oil pipeline in Alaska. It is an engineering marvel with no pollution and no interference to the lives of the animals. I was once copilot to a man who made a living by examining gas and oil lines, and flew many missions with him without seeing pollution. Once, we saw what may have been a leak in a gas line. We buzzed the cows in the pasture, landed our small plane, and made a telephone call. My untrained eye was unaware of pollution, so minor was it. The cows were not upset by our momentary interference of their grazing.

Mr. Bush wants to reach out to those in need and cooperate with the Democrats in achieving this goal. My guess is that he will accomplish that goal and the Democrats, if they try to prevent him, will run afoul of the electorate. Mr. Bush is not going to invite his opponents into the inner sanctum, but he will ask some Democrats to join him in providing the energy resources we must have, ask for tax cuts to keep the economy strong, ease present regulations to facilitate business,

press for a reduction of interest rates, and enable minorities to get the education they need—with school choice if there is no other way. To prevent or even obstruct any of these goals will be political suicide.

Mr. Bush is being portrayed as unintelligent, if not a little stupid. He knows that and does not argue. (He has a master’s degree from Harvard whereas Al Gore dropped out of two graduate schools.) His political opponents will discover that President Bush is far from stupid and, on the contrary, is a wily opponent with superior political skills. Like his father, George W. Bush is an exemplary gentleman who speaks the truth and will follow the law. He will not befool the White House. He has a twinkle in his eye and exudes friendship. His enemies will learn to respect him. Ω

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