

Some thoughts on the state of the nation as the 2012 election campaign begins (even though it is just Summer, 2011):

The U.S. As A Third World Country

After the end of World War II, led by the Soviet Union, nearly every demagogue, dictator and oppressive regime in the world attempted to gain and maintain power, at least in part, by convincing the populace that their problems were not caused by the government in power, but by the United States of America. The people of the U.S. were good people, but the government was said to be evil. The U.S. was used to distract people from the fact that only a few individuals had all the power and were getting very rich.

Beginning in 1980, the Republican Party adopted a similar message that the problems faced by all people in this country, whether upper, middle or lower class, were caused by the government. We needed to “get government off our backs” and let the free market work its wonders. By now, a sizeable proportion of Americans believe this to be true. Over the course of the past 30 years, regulations were eased and today, a group of legislators who espouse this philosophy has taken control of the Republican Party and, by remaining unified in Congress, taken control of the government in Washington. This attitude has also sent us well down a path where more and more of the wealth of this country is in the hands of fewer and fewer people.

They have succeeded to the point where every Republican presidential candidate must kowtow to the anti-government segment of their party. We now have serious Republican candidates who want to dismantle Social Security and Medicare, repeal the minimum wage, bust whatever unions still exist, and, in short, return us to those not-so-glorious years of the robber barons. Espousing an anti-government philosophy may, indeed, bring us to the brink of third world status, where only a few individuals have all the power and get very rich.

The Anti-War Movement

I have little patience with the people, usually on the left, who rail against “two unnecessary and ill-conceived wars.” They are half right. Yes, the Iraq War was unnecessary and started under numerous clearly false pretenses. However, the Afghanistan War was not. Some 90% of the people in this country supported going into Afghanistan to throw out the Taliban and go after Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda. By diverting our money and attention away from Afghanistan and towards Iraq, the one correct fight was diluted and extended long past the time that should have been needed for success. During the 2008 campaign, President Obama continually made this point, saying he would wind down the Iraq War as quickly as possible and focus more attention on Afghanistan so that war could end soon, too. This is exactly what he has done. While this may not be happening as quickly as we would like, it is also wrong to lump Iraq and Afghanistan together. They were two different wars, started for two different reasons.

Congressional Oath of Office

I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter: So help me God.

When members of Congress say that their primary goal is not the welfare of the United States of America but to make sure that, from the day he takes office, the newly elected President of the United States serves just one term, are those members of Congress breaking their oath? Just asking.

2012 Outlook

For Democrats who believe that one of those “Tea Party crazies” could never win the 2012 Presidential election, just remember how many of us said in 1978 or 1979, (as I did)? “Don’t be ridiculous, Ronald Reagan could never be elected President.”

The Current vs. The Vietnam War Era

I have recently begun asking friends if they think things in this country are worse now or were they worse during the Vietnam War years. (For those who don’t remember or are too young, the Vietnam War years were a terrible time in American history, when everyone was judged by their dress and their hair; when each side hated the other; when National Guard troops were shooting and killing American college students; when one Presidential candidate undermined the peace efforts of the sitting President; when things got so bad that a sizeable number of people had a real fear (paranoia?) that the President of the United States would cancel the 1972 election; etc., etc. etc.)

I believe things are worse today. Although Lyndon Johnson’s decisions to get us deeper and deeper into war, followed by Richard Nixon’s continuing and expanding the war were disastrous, and Nixon’s ability to attain the Presidency was built in part on exploiting, exacerbating, and escalating the internal conflict within the United States, there were some accomplishments. For instance, the EPA came into existence under Nixon, and Nixon would have agreed to health care reform that was apparently more comprehensive than was recently signed by President Obama. Nixon was a politician who understood that he could more easily maintain power and achieve what he wanted by at least, at times, working with the opposition.

Today, the Republican Party is run by people who do not believe that politics is the art of the compromise. They draw their lines in the sand and refuse to budge. They are led by people who have no sense of history or understanding of diplomacy, economics, compassion or the Constitution. And those Republicans who have demonstrated over the years an ability or understanding of what it takes to govern successfully (people like Richard Lugar, John McCain, the two Senators from Maine, Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe, and others), have acquiesced to the Tea Partiers. We have not had riots in the streets here as they have been having in Britain because Democrats have been able to protect some basic programs. But I fear that if a Republican becomes President and follows through on the Tea Party agenda, the social unrest will spill into the streets. 2012 may be a very critical and potentially dangerous election for the United States of America.