

## KENNEDY, GOLDWATER, DEMOCRATS AND '64 (Originally published November 1963)

If there is any such thing as objective and unbiased reporting today in the field of political commentary, it is almost impossible for a truth seeker to ferret out. It may have always been thus, but in these recent years of instant punditry and news analysis, the intelligent reader, viewer and listener have been buffeted as never before by conflicting, opinionated presentations that often slyly deride any viewpoint but their own.

To illustrate the dilemma, one need only contrast the opinions of two nationally known columnists: Ralph McGill and Victor Lasky. Both of these men write intelligently, with authority and with apparent sincerity; both are deeply concerned about the state of the nation. To McGill, President Kennedy is a dedicated, astute and courageous leader; and a man of dynamic intelligence, devoted to the interests of his country. To Lasky, President Kennedy is a superficial egotist with vacillating convictions; inexperienced, immature and undependable; and a man of dangerous intelligence devoted only to promoting his own political future. To McGill, Senator Goldwater is a misguided reactionary, a throwback to an age of political innocence, a man of no moment who should be pitied because of his obviously stupid views. To Lasky, Senator Goldwater is a solid and sincere patriot and a man of mature and intelligent reasoning, completely dedicated to the welfare of his country.

Where does the truth lie in these appraisals of Kennedy and Goldwater? Does it rest with McGill? And if you agree with McGill's estimates, would the facts that he is an outspoken liberal advocating a managed economy and "democratic socialism" and is employed by the administration on several presidential advisory committees make you feel that he may write with a slanted pen? Or is Lasky correct? And if you side with him, does his background of conservatism and anti-collectivism and his antipathy for the present administration make you suspect bias on his part?

President Kennedy is what he is, and Senator Goldwater is what he is, in spite of how the Laskys and McGills want to interpret them for us. Good, bad or whatever they are, the average concerned citizen has little chance of developing an accurate evaluation of his own about them. He must rely on secondhand information, fleeting impressions, instinct, past and present performances and material that the men themselves have written. And in this age of ghostwriting, even this is suspect.

One basic area of disagreement between viewpoints seems to stem from the opposing stands of Liberalism versus Conservatism. The Liberal, under whatever banner he may sail, is convinced that the future of the United States lies in the planned and controlled economy of socialism and collectivism, and that the sooner the transition can be completed, the better off the nation will be.

The Conservative, regardless of what he is called, feels that the original constitutional principles on which this country ascended so rapidly to greatness have already been weakened too much and that only a reversal of our socialistic trend and a return toward constitutionality will salvage our system of government.

Our own impression about one aspect of the present political situation is that the liberal and socialistic elements that have predominated in the Democratic Party have attempted to take advantage of

an inexperienced and personable president—who had no firm convictions other than a devouring ambition to hold the office—to move the country closer toward their social utopia. Mr. Kennedy's narrow margin of victory in the past election was engineered through a number of peculiar voting alliances that capitalized on his appearance, religion, glib tongue, attractive wife and energetic and tireless organization financed by an outsized family fortune. The conclusion seems likely that the country did not elect a president; it was sold one in the same manner that a massive advertising campaign might put over a new brand of toothpaste.

The Democratic Party and its liberal components until very recently have confidently assumed that President Kennedy and his entrenched organization would be unbeatable in 1964. It is apparent now that they are beginning to have a few doubts. Most of the issues in Mr. Kennedy's campaign oratory have proved ephemeral. His inept handling of the Congress and his difficulties in relationships with friendly allies such as Canada, France, England, and recently Latin America, have not improved his stature in statesmanship. His confrontations with Premier Khrushchev and his reactions to crises like the Berlin Wall and Cuba have not been reassuring as a profile in courage. His record of performance in office has fallen considerably short of glowing, pre-election promises, and many of his followers have become disillusioned. Like all illusions, the carefully manufactured and promoted image has faded on prolonged exposure to reality.

(c) *The Bulletin of the Muscogee County (Georgia) Medical Society*, "Doctor's Lounge", Nov 1963, Vol. X Vol 11, p.9