

THE COMING ELECTION (Originally published October 1964)

Now that the commotions of the Republican and Democratic party conventions are over, it should become possible to view the goings on with some degree of perspective. At this time in the middle of campaign oratory and charges and countercharges from both factions, it is not easy to know how the election will be decided a few weeks from now. The one certain fact that has emerged from all that has gone before is that there will be little room for fence-straddling when the votes are cast in November. Although the party labels of Democrat and Republican persist, the nation will be given the choice of voting for a party that believes in progressive socialization, expansion of federal control, and increasing international accommodation, or for a party of conservative desocialization, decentralization of federal power, and less international involvement.

The Republican Convention, in spite of the earnest objections of its eastern, liberal component, demonstrated that there is a genuine and nationwide conservative force hopeful of slowing or reversing the trend to socialism and limiting the power of central government. The Democratic Convention, over the smothered objections of its scattered conservatives, demonstrated little beyond its wish to remain in power and continue its expansion of social legislation. The Republicans were unable to suppress the squabbling between their opposed factions—an unavoidable occurrence since the out conservatives were wresting control of the party from the in liberals. The Democrats were eminently successful in muffling intra-party antagonisms by a forceful display of power control on the part of its leader and his chosen assistant. Since the conventions, both Goldwater and Johnson have made efforts to bring their intra-party dissenters back into the fold. In this, perhaps Goldwater has been the more successful in that there have been no outright defections of strongly held Republican states to the opposite side; Johnson, perhaps because of his power tactics, apparently will lose the support of at least three and possibly more of the usually strong Democratic Southern states.

In James Burns' recent book, *The Deadlock of Democracy*, it is written that our system of government for many years now has become a system of four-party politics. The parties, classified in the descending order of liberalism, are the Presidential Democrats, Presidential Republicans, Congressional Republicans, and Congressional Democrats. The classifications are not static ones and legislators frequently move from one classification into another and sometimes back again. The liberal elements in both major parties usually align themselves with the President and his appointed advisors and tend to vote as a unit. Some of these liberals have been elected to Congress, but a fair number of them are presidential appointees who have remained in government through different administrations

and eventually turn up in Congress (the most recent example, Pierre Salinger). On the other hand, the Congressional Democrats and Republicans are almost entirely locally elected politicians, a large percentage of the lawyers from rural districts, whose coalition voting is usually conservative. The combined voting power of these conservative groups has served in the past as a strong restraining influence against excessive presidential power and extremes of liberal legislation. In the coming election, the Goldwater-Miller ticket represents the Congressional Republican group; the Johnson-Humphrey ticket, the Presidential Democrat group. Even though both Johnson and Humphrey were locally elected politicians, their attachments ever since coming to Congress have always been strongly presidential, and particularly in the case of Humphrey, loyally liberal.

This year for the first time in over thirty years, the two presidential tickets are offering diametrically opposed viewpoints. For the first time in many administration changes, the liberal and progressive socialist elements, which necessarily have proliferated and predominated in every department of government uninterruptedly for three decades, find that there is no haven for them in the conservatively dominated Republican ticket and its platform. Instead of having liberal sympathizers on both party tickets, and thus a chance (no matter which administration goes in) to proceed with the vast social planning already in effect and outlined for the future, there is liberalism this time only with the Democrats.

The situation is a difficult one also for the conservative Congressional Democrats. They cannot cling to their beliefs and support a conservative Republican without jeopardizing their positions of influence in Congress. Yet if they remain conservative and stay with the Democratic Party, there is already evidence that they will become ineffective in the face of the growing power of the Presidential Democrats. Any hope of moderation, through their long association with President Johnson, that these conservatives must have had for true concessions from the liberal elements of the Democratic Party was quashed by Johnson's choice of Humphrey and the alignment of Big Labor with the ticket.

After the Republican Convention and the strong showing of the Goldwater faction, there was a considerable swing in public opinion to the view that there was a possibility the Republicans might win. After the Democratic Convention and the impressive display of Johnson's political control, there was an equally great, if not greater, swing of public opinion in the opposite direction. At present, if the polls are to be believed, President Johnson still maintains a comfortable advantage.

The major issues, however, remain the same. Conservatism against liberalism; republicanism against socialism; nationalism against internationalism; decreasing federal control against increasing federal control; decentralization against centralization; continued armament against disarmament. And there are other issues to influence the voting, like the personalities of the two candidates, civil

rights and property rights, foreign policy, corruption in government and Communist subversion in government.

When the two candidates are compared on the basis of personality and “image” in the way that Kennedy and Nixon were compared, it would seem that Goldwater has the advantage. If they are compared in regard to ethical conduct in office, again Goldwater seems ahead in that there is no link with corruption nor any whisper of scandal attached to him. When they are compared in experience, political ability and know-how, Johnson seems well ahead.

In spite of the prevalence of anti-Goldwater propaganda in the newspapers and on television, it is difficult to believe that the numerous pollings can be correct when they show Johnson ahead by figures of twenty, thirty, or forty percent. Incidents like the voting in Detroit on the rights of its property owners, the strong conservative sentiment expressed by the voting in numerous recent local elections, and the racial disturbances, the riots and lootings, the public school mixing problems, and the political unrest in many of the large urban population centers across the country, all tend to discredit poll opinion that all is well for the Democrats.

From a purely intuitive and unscientific viewpoint and taking into account the previous Kennedy-Nixon contest, in predicting the outcome of the election ahead it would seem that Johnson has nowhere near the popular appeal of Kennedy, while Goldwater has at least as much if not more appeal as Nixon. It would seem that most of the Republican voters of the past will vote Republican again this November, whereas many Democratic voters who went for Kennedy in 1960, not only in the South but in many of the large cities of the North, Midwest and West, will vote for Goldwater in 1964. It would seem that Goldwater should not lose more than three or four of the states that went Republican in the last election, while picking up that many or more from the South alone, and at least having a fighting chance to upset predictions in such important states as California, Texas, Illinois and Pennsylvania.

Elections, however, apparently are not won by intuition or unscientific guesswork. Even with his looks, his personality, his beautiful wife, his family and his wealth, it took an effective organization, strenuous campaign work, and a conscience-less ability to utilize the sordid realities of machine politics to squeak Mr. Kennedy into office. Without the attractive attributes of the Kennedy personality, Mr. Johnson must depend on his advantage as the incumbent and an even more effective political organization.

By intuition again, the election should be a close one. If Goldwater wins, it will be because of a latent dissatisfaction with the methods of federal bureaucracy and an unmeasurable but widespread undercurrent of conservative sentiment; and there will ultimately be a major upheaval of the personnel in all departments of

government. The effect of a conservative victory will necessarily result in considerable disturbance of an economy geared to unlimited federal spending. The nation may well finally have to “ask not” what its government can do for it, resolve to pull in its belt, and go back to work. If Mr. Johnson wins, and especially by his “landslide,” it will mean that he has done his homework exceedingly well, that he is The Master Politician, and that the conservatives had better change into progressive clothing and follow the easy road of socialism to LBJ’s shining Great Society.

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