

POLITICS, NOT QUITE AS USUAL

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The November elections now upon us come with the promise of a major shift of public sentiment away from the steady drift toward socialism and welfarism, which has gone on uninterruptedly for almost thirty-five years. Mr. Goldwater's fight two years ago against overwhelming odds and a political deck neatly stacked in Mr. Johnson's favor, while premature, nevertheless indicated a rising trend of conservatism and disillusionment with the liberal socialist approach. In many states now, Democratic incumbents are running scared for the first time in years.

The strange coalition of voting interests that made up the Democratic political machine in Georgia came apart with a bang in the primary elections when Maddox, political innocent and an extremist by anyone's definition, won the party's nominee for governor. Georgia voters now have a choice between two brands of anti-administration "conservatism." They must either go Republican with the young, personable and intelligent Mr. Callaway, who has served conscientiously and with sincerity as a Congressman, or they must cast their lot with the volatile and unpredictable Mr. Maddox whose educational background is limited and whose political experience is nil. It should not be a hard choice to make.

There seems to be an almost universal concern throughout the state that Mr. Maddox might become Georgia's next governor—a terrible thing for the state, all agree. Yet there are many of those concerned ones who, by default of basic principle, are willing to let this happen because, a) they refuse to vote for a Republican, or b) cannot abide having the established liberal structure challenged by someone of intelligence in a powerful office. These are the ones who give lip service to tolerance but cannot tolerate ideas in disagreement with their own. These are the ones who cannot bring themselves to support Maddox openly, and who cast about for reasons not to support Callaway. These are the ones who halfheartedly suggest write-in campaigns, while squirming uncomfortably in the knowledge that such write-ins would help Maddox win.

Were it not so amusing, we could feel a genuine sorrow for the editorial writers and columnists of that consistent promoter and defender of liberalism, *The Atlanta Constitution*. Consider their uncomfortable predicament. In the primary run-off, a monster that they helped to create by relentless attack and bitter ridicule as he wielded pistols and axe handles in defense of his segregationist stand, convincingly polishes off Ellis Arnall, the candidate they had resurrected to save the day for liberalism. A lady from Decatur wrote in to the letters column that she had lived there for 45 years and never heard of Lester Maddox until the *Constitution* made a public figure of him; she wondered

if the paper had ever heard of boomerangs. (As if it needed to be reminded.) At any rate, they are stuck with him as candidate of the Democratic Party to which they are so solidly wedded, and they cannot support him. On the other hand, the Republican candidate, young, handsome, wealthy, educated, intelligent, sincere, responsible; energetic, articulate, devoted to his State and to his attractive wife and children, has every attribute the *Constitution* could admire, did admire in Jack Kennedy, except one. Callaway votes the conservative line. The *Constitution*, rationalizing and struggling with its conscience, cannot support him either. It is conceivable that the paper could overlook Callaway's Republican label and support him if he were just half as liberal as a Jarvits. But a Goldwater Republican? It is asking too much.

The progression of events that led up to this predicament of the *Constitution* is an interesting one to rehash. Their antagonism to Callaway is a preexisting one dating back to his support of Griffin against Sanders, and to his conversion to the Republican cause in campaigning for Goldwater. The fact that Goldwater carried the state and Callaway went to Congress did nothing to salve the *Constitution's* wounds. Earlier in the year—when it seemed likely Callaway was considering seriously a gubernatorial race—as a precaution, the paper began working him over on its editorial pages. At that time, with the former capable Governor Vandiver almost certain to be the Democratic nominee, even the Callaway friends and supporters doubted Vandiver could be beaten. Then came rumors of a National Democratic Administration so worried over the possibility of losing the state to the Republicans that pressure was being put on the popular Senator Talmadge to announce his intention of returning home to run for governor. A couple of months later Vandiver announced that because of a heart condition, and on the advice of his doctors, he was withdrawing from the race. (This was the first time Vandiver's heart trouble had ever made the papers.).

Coincident with the Vandiver withdrawal was the headlined announcement that Senator Talmadge was indeed going to run. For the next three or four days, in editorials, cartoons and headlines, the *Constitution* gloated publicly and taunted Callaway (who had yet to announce his candidacy) to forget his hopes and give up. Herman had come to the rescue of the Georgia Democrats and the Great Society, and all was well.

The Senator then began to have second thoughts and with the arm twist off, started to make noises like he might not run after all. He would only come home if the voters really wanted him. A good many of them, and apparently some of the influential ones around the state, really wanted Talmadge to stay put in Washington. And so with the arm twist on again from another direction and to the great discomfiture of the *Constitution*, Herman red-facedly but gracefully backed down.

With the two strong candidates officially out of it and with all in confusion, Democratic gubernatorial candidates popped out like hives. The *Constitution* dusted off aging boy-wonder Arnall, freshened up his liberal image and presented him confidently as Georgia's salvation. Jumping into the contest with Arnall was old hand-slapping politician Byrd. The perennial Hoke Smith, smooth-talking James Gray, a New Englander gone Southern and conservative, a bright young unknown, Jimmy Carter, and, of all things, that ridiculous defender of Pickwick, Lester Maddox.

Discounting Carter as a late starter and a political unknown (but not entirely discounting his appeal), and correctly evaluating Byrd and Smith as also-rans, Gray was singled out by the *Constitution* as Arnall's main threat—with Maddox assigned a spot somewhere between Gray and Carter (but who could really be serious about Lester?). In an attempt to insure an Arnall victory by fragmenting the opposition vote and possibly with a conscience twinge about having driven him out of the restaurant business, the *Constitution* was unusually kind to its former archenemy during the primary campaign. In one editorial, Mr. Maddox was even complimented in a backhanded sort of way for conducting a decent, hate-less, high-level campaign.

Unfortunately for the liberal cause, when the final votes were counted, while Mr. Arnall did come out on top, the total vote against him was in the neighborhood of 3 to 1. Even more appalling was that Mr. Maddox edged out Mr. Carter to finish as runner-up and win a spot in the primary runoff.

Well, that was bad because the *Constitution* had really hoped that Arnall would win without a run-off. But it was not *too* bad because although the Maddox strength was surprising, it was obvious that all the intelligent vote that had gone to Carter, a semi-liberal, and at least half of the vote that had gone to Gray—his appeal was to the intelligent also and too fancy for the peasants—would line up behind Arnall. The column writers and editorialists warmed to the task of destroying Mr. Maddox for a second time, and, with his own pistols, axe handles and Klan robes, the candidate was mauled unmercifully in the weeks prior to the run-off. It seemed evident to the paper that in a contest between enlightenment (even of the liberal type) and ignorance, there could be no doubt that the thinking voters of Georgia would endorse Arnall. To help things out and fight voter apathy, the *Constitution* urged all to get out and vote.

On September 28, and in even greater numbers than in the primary, the voters turned out and answered the call emphatically. The result came as a shock—not only to the *Constitution* and the liberal Democrats, but also to most of the intelligent voters of Georgia, Republican and Democrat. Mr. Maddox swamped Mr. Arnall, but good.

And so here we are. It is our feeling that the big vote for Maddox against Arnall was not truly a vote for this hard-line, segregationist, little man and his peculiar brand of conservatism. It was a vote of spite and repudiation. Not against Arnall as a man, but against the liberal, socialist, welfarist approach to government that he represented. It was a vote against the present, confused, irritating, politics-as-usual National Administration and its insincere Great Society, and it was a vote, too, against the liberal, Administration apologists of *The Atlanta Constitution*, who have convinced themselves that Atlanta is Georgia, and who presume to represent Georgia to the nation and speak for it in their own twisting, slanted idiom.

This time we would prefer to be voting for Mr. Callaway's type of responsible conservatism against Mr. Arnall's Great Society liberalism. If the shoe were on the other foot and we had to choose between Mr. Arnall and Mr. Maddox as governor, we would have to swallow our distaste and support Mr. Arnall as the better man, hoping for better luck next time. So, we will leave it with the *Constitution* to strive with its conscience. Our own mind is made up.

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