

Q. All of you are familiar with my guest, the Hon. Allard Lowenstein, either by name and reputation, or by achievement and accomplishment. As someone who has served in the United States Congress with much devotion and distinction, I want to begin this Dialogue by talking about what I call "The November 6th Gap." By this I mean the fact that before November the 5th, which is Election Day, whether on the 4th, 3rd or 2nd, a candidate for office always says the right thing. But after Election Day, he begins to speak differently, and even more to the point, he begins to act differently. One example: When Gerald Ford was Vice President I heard him say with great passion, "I am in favor of changing the United States recognition of Israel's capital from Tel Aviv to its rightful place in Jerusalem, and hence move the U.S. Embassy there." However, when he became President, he totally reversed himself. I could give other examples, Mr. Lowenstein, but in effect what I'm asking is whether this phenomenon of "The November 6th Gap" exists in every politician because of the nature of getting elected to public office, and if so, how can the average person believe or trust in politicians?

A. The question that Rabbi Berkowitz started with is a most interesting one for anyone to answer but especially for me. In my case, I did not follow the prescription that so-called "successful" politicians are supposed to follow. When I ran for reelection the only November 6th gap for me was that my seat was dismembered because my district had been re-distributed. In my case, what I was *after* the election was what I said I would be *before* the election, and so my district was re-distributed.

Now without in any way patting myself on the back, what happens to other public officials when so often they are not what you think they are when you pick them? The first thing that happens in Congress is that you're briefed as soon as you're elected. When they take you into the briefing room there's a blackboard and the senior members from both parties give lectures to the new members. I'll never forget the first lecture which began with this phrase on the blackboard: "The first job of a Congressman is to get re-elected." Now in my view if you start from that premise, almost nothing that you do is going to be right. Almost everything you do is going to be concocted to achieve something which has to prevent your dealing with problems you face with any independence or courage. If you start out with the notion that your election is God's gift to the Congress or the country, or is the only solution to the problems of your community, then you can justify everything. And I'm afraid that the biggest difficulty that elected people have is remembering that their utility is dependent on their commitment to some purpose beyond keeping themselves in office.

Q. Of those politicians who have been elected, what percentage of them would you say are filled with a sense of conviction and commitment and desire to carry out mandates that they have offered to their constituents?

A. Every politician or every human being, and I think even Rabbis perhaps, are a mixture of motives. I wouldn't want to ascribe percentages because in each person these tensions exist. Between the extreme of a Joe McCarthy and the extreme of an Eleanor Roosevelt, whose notion of public life was always to try to stand for the things she believed in at whatever price, between those two ends of the spectrum the slide is much more toward a bland, noncommittal, don't-do-anything-very-controversial position in the middle. When I was in Congress I used to get lots of letters about the mistreatment of the Tennessee walking horses. I'm not even sure I know what a Tennessee walking horse was; but some group was concerned that a Tennessee walking horse was mistreated. Every day mail would come in about Tennessee walking horses, but no mail would come in about enormous social injustices to old people or about the draft of young people. Why? Because there was no organized pressure. You must remember that the great middle part of Congress responds to public pressures much

Several years ago, I was privileged to have Allard Lowenstein at the Dialogue series. From that moment on, we became close, intimate friends. He was someone whose unqualified blend of idealism and friendship, commitment and integrity, concern and sensitivity, touched me very, very deeply. And most of all, his simple, loving devotion to any cause or person or situation moved me, for his rare presence in a world scarred by brutal selfishness and ceaseless hostility.

I stand, as do thousands, shattered at this cruel, immeasurable loss of human power and unfulfilled potential. Al Lowenstein shone with singular brilliance and energy to uplift and mend man's condition, to restore his face to an original purity. To this awesome quest, he dedicated every waking hour of his life. I often think of him as a memorial tribute to this great American, special Jew, unique person, and loyal friend, the likes of which will not be seen for a long time, if ever at all. He mattered. For he was a human being who taught us about being human. And now he is gone; gone too soon.

Blessed — and a blessing — will always be his luminous memory.

Rabbi William Berkowitz



Allard Lowenstein as he saw himself

more consistently than to anything else. So I would answer you, Rabbi, by saying that there are some people in public life who will stand up and be counted — whatever the price. You can name them, and you know perfectly well that they are a limited number. This is not to say that the great majority of public servants are evil. They are simply people who are inclined to go along with whatever the pressures are, and that majority spectrum probably accounts for four-fifths of the people who are in office. Now at the same time that can be used effectively for good causes, because if they're subject to the right sorts of pressures for the right kinds of commitment, you can get responses from them. That doesn't mean that they're going to be leaders or offer leadership — which in my view is the greatest shortage in public life in this country. Because committed public service is not a question of whom you pressure to do things; it is a question of who will stand up and say the hard things about situations which require courage. If you think in that way you will also understand how much a democracy, and especially one like the United States, depends on this. Think for a moment what would have happened to the United States in 1933 during the Depression if the assassination attempt on Franklin Roosevelt had succeeded! We'd have ended up having to cope with both John Nance Garner and the Depression.

Q. The late Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, once said that the whole genius of Judaism during the period of the Judges and Kings was that morality and politics were not two realms, but that politics too was under the rule and the judgment of God. With that in mind, can a man or a woman be an active, successful politician and yet be ethical? In other words, Mr. Lowenstein, are the realms of politics and ethics always in clash and contrast?

A. There's always temptation in life, and politics has a microcosm of some of the worst temptations of all. There's always that temptation to forget what the central reasons and purposes for living are. I think that one of the greatest wisdoms and contributions of Judaism is the notion of the universality of ethics in life. That means I can't see any way that you can divorce ethical consideration from political judgment, because if you do that you're saying that ethics are irrelevant to the decisions that affect life the most.

Q. Specifically though, I am asking if a Congressman or politician can be successful

and yet be ethical at the same time?

A. Yes, I think you can make very difficult political decisions, difficult in terms of the political quotient that you face, if you're prepared to accept the greater degree of abuse for it. I think one anecdote describes the situation more clearly than anything else. This has to do with an incident that happened to me during the time at the height of the Vietnam War when many of you will remember I represented a district which was heavily Republican-Conservative. It was supposed to be a district that still supported the war. I always felt that since I said my views to get elected, then I would vote my convictions. That was not inconsistent with what I owed the district. And I used to try to go to places where people would disagree with me, feeling that it was much more useful than going where people already shared the same viewpoint. I remember one night in one of the towns of my district I noticed an ad in the paper for a dance to support our boys in Vietnam. I thought I must go to that, even though I hadn't been invited. I went; it was in a quonset hut. They were charging \$2.00 admission, and when I arrived a terrible argument broke out as to whether I should be let in. One person said, "Let him in, but make him pay ten times the normal fee." Another person said, "Don't let the SOB in at all because he's not supporting our boys. Why should he be here?" Anyway, while they were arguing, I put down \$2.00 and I walked in. The next thing I know I'm surrounded by a group of people who were very angry and they said, "Why are you defending draft dodgers?" Then a man comes over, and he starts swinging and he tells me "You're destroying America. Your position is outrageous. I'm going to get revenge. . . ." He's going on like this, and I'm standing there wondering what's going to happen next. While this is all going on, the band stops playing a polka. And the next thing I know a woman gets to the microphone and shouts, "Oh, my goodness, we have a Congressman here, a Congressman." The next thing I know she says, "You come down here Mr. Congressman and you say something to this group." I start walking down the aisle and I remember thinking about the man out for revenge; and the kids are still throwing beer. And I said to myself: This is my last mile — but that it should occur in a quonset hut with people drinking beer, I should end this way? Then all of a sudden, the band starts playing "Hail to

the Chief." I get down to the end of the aisle, and I said into the microphone the same thing that I would have said here, or at Harvard, or any other place, about why it was my idea that we were supporting our boys by trying to save people from being killed. Anyway, the end of the incident was fascinating, because when I got through saying those things, the man who was going to get revenge before was still rushing over to me and trying to get revenge, and it was still a question whether I would get out without landing a punch. But the impact on that audience was clear, because they never heard anyone express a point of view different from the one that they had been hearing over and over again. I mention that anecdote explicitly because if I hadn't been in Congress, I would never have had the opportunity to speak to people who didn't agree with me and try to hear what they think and let them hear what I think.

Q. Mr. Lowenstein, as you were talking about the state of leadership among politicians, I was reminded of two stories that are in a book entitled *Man Without A Country*, by Edward Everett Hale, who served the Chaplain for the United States Senate. Once Hale met a man who turned to him and asked, "Reverend Hale, do you pray for the Senate?" And Hale looked at the man directly in the eyes and said, "No, I look at the Senators and pray for the country." The second story he relates is how two men met on the street and one said, "Well, we can at least be sure of two things — death and taxes." And the second man turned to him and said, "What you say is true, but there's one advantage to death — it doesn't get worse every time Congress convenes."

A. Rabbi, your stories bring to my mind the case of the Congressman who got very worried about whether he was doing so many bad things that he might not get to heaven. He was almost obsessed with this, so he called his Rabbi and he said, "Rabbi, I have to find out if I am going to heaven." The Rabbi said, "Well, I can't tell you off-hand. I have to check up to see what you've been doing, what's going on. Call me next week. Call me on Friday before I go into shul." So a week passes and the Congressman in his nervous state calls the Rabbi and he says, "Rabbi, what have you found out?" And the Rabbi answers, "Well, I have some good news for you and some bad news. The good news is that you are going to heaven. And the bad news is you're going tomorrow."

Q. Mr. Lowenstein, let us turn from your experience with politicians to your contact for many years with young people. Would you say that young people today have given up on America? Moreover, would you say they have lost hope? Have they chosen the path of indifference, or the path of radicalism, or the path of revolution?

A. No, I think not. I think young people are like most Americans. In one year a President and a Vice President were removed from office because they were both crooks. The generation growing up now has a different sense of America than we had. We grew up almost like Father and Mother were in the White House. We had a sense that when things went wrong, there was a concern for justice. When our parents, or grandparents, or some of us ourselves, came to this country, it was, in a sense, a land in which justice was automatic. There was a sense of hopefulness to everything. Well, in the last decade that's gone. It's gone so far away that it isn't the young people who have lost it; it's the country that's lost it. In losing that, we've lost something clearly intangible but enormously important to any society, particularly a free society that has to solve difficult problems. So I don't think the young people have lost hope in America or become revolutionary, or whatever. I think what happened is young people are raised now in a situation where cynicism is such that if you weren't cynical about what public officials were doing and what's happened in the country, then you'd be awfully stupid. There was just too much to be cynical about. However, the question is how do you translate that cynicism into hope? How do you turn that feeling into outrage instead of disaffection?

That's the problem. I think a lot of young people are beginning to understand that whatever happens in this country, they are going to inherit it. If they write it off and say that nothing can be changed, what happens then? That's not a great victory, because who lives here? I can't blame the young people for not having the same simple sense of America that I have, the sense that no matter what, inevitably we are going to work things out. It's not clear that it's inevitable anymore. Things are much more complicated than they were and much more difficult. All the polls — whether Gallup, or Harris — show that 80 per cent of the public feels less hopeful about the future than they did 10 years ago. The generation of today doesn't remember the unity and the *esprit* in this country of stopping Hitler. They only remember a war which nobody understood, in which people went on and on feeling that they were having their lives disrupted pointlessly, or that they were being lied to. So there is an erosion of a fundamental optimism and sense of community. In that regard I think that we need a revival of leadership which can give people a feeling of change and hope. Young people will be in the vanguard of trying to make that change when there is new leadership. It's very hard for an individual of 80 years old or 18 years old to start that kind of effort in this country, which is so large! Who has the ability now to reach 200 million people? On the other hand, the difficulty of arousing people to make the effort is a very, very great one. Young people today don't have the same kind of motivation they had years ago when they were facing the Vietnam War, and just as all people respond to the immediate pressures on themselves, young people do too. I think we have to understand that if there is less activity, less emotion, less voluntary effort being projected, that's a problem we have to deal with and overcome. I don't think we should write off anything or anyone. In fact, I think in some ways the disengagement of young people is a reaction that's very intelligent considering what some of the options have been.

Yet the problem goes deeper. I remember when we used to say that the people of East Berlin were voting with their feet because they would walk out of East Berlin into West Berlin. They were showing their contempt for Soviet oppression by getting out. Now we have a situation in America where the great majority of people don't vote — literally, the great majority don't vote. Ask yourself a question — maybe it's not apathy? Maybe it's a conscious decision of people who don't believe there is anything to vote for and, therefore, they're going to protest by *not* voting.

Q. Mr. Lowenstein, when you speak of a distressing phenomenon, I can add one other major area we are witnessing. The fact is that New Yorkers and many other Americans in urban communities, do not go out at night. They are literally afraid to walk the streets. Now, we've heard a lot of talk and a lot of rhetoric about crime, law and order and justice. But we've seen few results: Are we doomed to a situation where fear is going to reign as king?

A. I grew up on the West Side of Manhattan. Then my wife and I lived with 3 small children in a section of Brooklyn which has the second highest crime rate in the City of New York. I can remember my wife was once asked, when I was campaigning, what would happen if someone stopped her with a knife on the street? She said, "I'd stick out my hand and say, 'I'm Jenny Lowenstein, please vote for my husband,'" shake hands and walk off. Of course, she was kidding, but crime is no joke. The sense of fear that you have in this community compared to what it was when we were growing up here, the legitimate concern with survival — all the things, Rabbi Berkowitz, that you were describing — are now such an ingrained part of life not only in New York City but in the urban centers throughout the country, that they constitute something which nobody in their right mind would accept. Yet that's what people are doing. They are accepting it. And it is that acceptance which

seems to be the most debilitating part of this whole area. There has got to be a procedure in the American institutions themselves that will restore the sense that it is possible to live as neighbors and walk the streets safely, a feeling that is disappearing in the cities.

Let's face it: If we don't stop letting people who stab others go free, and if we can't make the system of justice responsive to the people who are the victims of the crime that rages through the cities, then all the social improvements are not going to change the fact of criminal misconduct. At the same time, I just appeal to all of you, you who are intelligent people. We must deal with situations of impossible housing, and no jobs, and no adequate opportunity to get a decent education in a school near where you live. We must deal with them because otherwise the cycle will never stop, and the cycle must stop. Figure it out yourself. If you can't get an education, how do you get a job? If you can't get a job, how do you get paid enough to get a decent place to live? And the cycle goes on and on. I remember in Congress we had a bill creating a program for training the kids who dropped out of high school. A hundred and sixty thousand dollars was the whole appropriation. We took 75 kids who had dropped out, and they were on drugs, and we began a rehabilitation program. We had private sector jobs promised to them. And then the program was just stopped, because it was inflationary; it was said that we couldn't afford the one hundred and sixty thousand dollars. But I ask you: Do you know what the cost will be if we have to pay for those kids after their expectations were raised and then dashed?

I voted on a bill which was called The Federal Criminal Justice Act. It was a very unpopular vote. I think there were only six of us who voted on it. In effect what it did was it provided for no-knock. You know what no-knock is? It violates the First, the Fifth and the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution. It was labeled as a bill to stop crime in the streets, so everybody went to vote for it. But that is not going to stop crime. It is demagogic. Are you going to stop even one crime in the streets by breaking into a house without having a warrant? Not at all. Are you aware of the problems that arose all over the United States when people's houses were broken into? The sad thing is the *police* got shot, because people didn't know who was breaking in, so they'd shoot a policeman! In Indiana, in Ohio, incidents occurred of innocent people having themselves destroyed, literally destroyed by this. So whatever we do, we have to deal with the problems that cause crime even as we protect the victims that have suffered from crime. I know there are no easy answers, but we must start making the efforts now.

Q. Mr. Lowenstein, when you served in Washington you were deeply involved in the problems of the Middle East and in particular those facing Israel. What was the mood in Washington concerning Israel, and did you encounter at any time people telling you that to help Israel as an American is to have dual loyalty, that old bogeyman charge?

A. I will never forget that when I was in the United States Army I was stationed at a place called Belsen, and I remember going down the road to where the pavement stopped and it became gravel. There were no signs, and then suddenly you were in a field that extended as far as you could see in any direction; and there were mounds, and mounds, and mounds. On each mound there was a sign — "Here are 800 dead people." I suppose that if someone grows up with that, it cauterizes them for the rest of their life. For me, I don't think there is any dual loyalty involved in having a commitment to America and at the same time having a commitment to prevent a recurrence of a situation where mounds of murdered bodies are placed in fields because the people were Jews. So my commitment is not in any sense dual, if by dual a conflict is implicit. My view is that America means freedom and an end to murder on the basis of race, an end to injustice on the basis of religion.

Now as far as the Middle East goes, I

suppose it's fair to say that a lot of people are using the great confusion over that area to justify an almost unthinking attack on a rational approach to foreign problems. I heard it at the U.N. First the U.N. authorizes Israel, and then suddenly some years later a resolution is passed saying that Zionism is racism. The incredible irrationality, but also the cleverness of that irrationality tries to depict the existence of Israel as somehow racist. I never understood that about the Vietnam War. I never understood the inconsistency in not wanting American bombers to destroy innocent villages and hamlets. Why was it inconsistent to oppose that and at the same time feel an obligation to sustain the security and strength of Israel, the only independent democratic society in the Middle East? I never could see that, and I still don't.

Q. Mr. Lowenstein, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, Prof. Robert Tucker, recently suggested "that Israel deploy its own nuclear weapons as an alternative to total dependence upon American support." He argues that it would serve as a deterrent to Arab attack. What do you think of this suggestion?

A. The assumption is that the only nation in the Middle East that is about to use nuclear weapons would be Israel. No one in Israel wants to make that assumption, because Israel is a terribly small place, and if a nuclear bomb were dropped on Tel Aviv, there would be nothing left in Jerusalem. Access to nuclear weapons on the Arab side is a fact that one has to cope with. I think that it's an awfully simplistic notion to say "use nuclear weapons in the Middle East." However, if the United States and other countries that can provide non-nuclear weapons do not make them available, one can never blame Israel for avoiding total destruction by using whatever weapons they have. That's one reason why we have to make available to Israel the necessary military equipment and conventional weapons to protect herself. The future of the world depends on avoiding nuclear war, and this is especially true of the Middle East.

Q. Again regarding the Middle East, how do you assess Mr. Sadat of Egypt?

A. Sadat has been doing a very difficult thing; that is to survive in an Arab country in a role dissimilar to anything previously taken within the Arab leadership. To that extent, one must say that if Sadat falls, it will be a danger signal. On the other hand, if Egypt has begun to accept co-existence and is now prepared to move into a new phase of developing her own resources to deal with hunger and education, and so on, why do they need an enormous amount of military equipment? I'm troubled about the fact that Sadat seems to feel that one necessary ingredient to Mideast progress is the participation of the United States in re-arming Egypt. There is not going to be any Israeli aggression against Egypt. Is he afraid from Libya? I don't understand why Egypt requires more weaponry. I can't ignore my sense of wariness that comes when I see someone in whom I want to believe doing things that are contradictory to his stated purpose.

Q. Do you view him as a moderate in the context of the Arab world?

A. I would say yes, although I think the word moderate is a little bit misleading. I see Sadat as a man who understands that the effort to eliminate misery through military aggrandizement is a failure. Therefore, if the Egyptian people are ever to enjoy the opportunities available to the rest of the world, they are going to have to face the world with a very different stance than Nasser trained them to accept. You are dealing with a one-party state, without opportunity for debate. Sadat functions in the inconsistent posture of being an autocrat or a dictator trying to do difficult things in a society which is trained to expect dictators to do otherwise. In that sense, I don't think that the word moderate applies. He's simply a man who is trying to reverse direction while not getting thrown off his horse, and that's not easy.

Q. What is your profile and your memory of John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy?

A. Oh, I knew Robert Kennedy a great deal better than I did Mrs. Roosevelt. Oddly enough, the first time I ever spent any time with him was after I had been Bill Ryan's campaign manager when Ryan was first elected to Congress. I went with Bill Ryan down to the House when he was to be sworn in, and we went to visit Senator Kennedy whom I had known not terribly well when he was a Congressman from Massachusetts. I think my sense of President Kennedy was everyone's sense of President Kennedy. It wasn't very personal, as my sense about Robert Kennedy came to be. But President Kennedy was to me one of those extraordinarily infrequent people who glitter in a way that is larger than life — they're smarter than you are, they're more attractive, they're richer, they're more powerful; they also have more warts on them. But all in all, President Kennedy was to me the incarnation of hope — the sense that America was moving. Consequently, in his death we lost an innocence that we have never regained, and in so many ways I think he was just beginning to reach his greatness when he died.

Q. My final question is this, Mr. Lowenstein: If by some chance you were to discover a genie in a bottle who could grant you three wishes for America, what would these three wishes be?

A. It's very easy to take that question and answer it glibly and do it an injustice, because it is, in fact, the wisest question of all. I think that we all really work for the same things, though we might say them differently. First: the society that realizes that justice is when people live equitably and equally with opportunity that's not dependent on sex or race or age or money. Second: I suppose that we would wish for each citizen, each human being, a kind of private situation where loneliness isn't the rule, and where there is contentment and a sense of affection and community. Finally, in any society which has those fundamentals, you also want to have enough of the assets of life — health, and rest, and peace, and most importantly the sense that our lives have made the lot of others less difficult than if we were not there. I said nothing that Rabbi don't say every Friday night and Saturday, nothing that the Declaration of Independence doesn't say. That's why I never felt any conflict in my loyalties to our beautiful tradition and loyalties to the country that makes all this possible.

Rabbi Berkowitz: Mr. Lowenstein, let me conclude with this story. One day in reading the story of Creation, there was a discussion among three men: a doctor, an engineer, and a politician. They read the Creation story and they then asked who was created first? Was the doctor created first? Or was the engineer who was created first? The doctor said, "Look, I was the first who was created. After all, who took the rib out to create woman?" But then the engineer said, "Look, this matter of creation requires one who was able to put it all together, who could look at the blueprint . . . it was the engineer . . . I could read the plans and therefore I was created first." When the doctor and the engineer finished, the politician said, "I was created first." And they said to him, "Why were you created first?" He replied: "Who made all of the chaos?" Now I relate this story because tonight is truly the opposite of that story. Here we have heard Allard Lowenstein, a politician in the best sense of the word, someone who has not created chaos but has created clarity, someone who has offered not confusion but commitment and concern. When the great cellist Rostropovich was once asked the difference between music and politics, he replied: "In music there can never be a false note." As we have listened to Allard Lowenstein, whether we agree with him or not, we must all admire that he is *one* politician in whom Rostropovich notwithstanding there are no false notes. And since the greatness of America is its people and not the laws in the statute books alone, then we can feel gratitude for this blessed land that has such exalted public servants like Allard Lowenstein who is one exponent of the noblest and finest in the United States of America.