

An English View: U.S. Is Confused,

By Henry Brandon
London Sunday Times

The American election campaign has only eight more days to go, but it has left the Nation confounded, frustrated and unhappy.

Americans were yearning for a Moses to lead them out of their sea of trouble and, short of that, for a man who would inspire their trust and galvanize the nation. But none of the candidates has lit a bonfire of enthusiasm except George Wallace, the third party candidate. And his is special and small and more that of an arsonist. None of the candidates has helped to clarify the big issues or at least been able to show the way to some light at the end of the tunnel. And it will be a long tunnel for whoever becomes President.

For this country is in a state of rebellion. On one side is the young generation of Negroes, increasingly impatient with the slowness, as they see it, with which the white Americans concede to them not the principle, but the practice of equal opportunity. And on the other, a fast growing white resistance movement dedicated above all to resisting or at least slowing down this impatience.

Two Extremes

In political terms, the rebellion expresses itself in two extremist movements which are undermining the American two-party system: the radicals of the New Left who are making common cause with the Negro militants, and the reactionaries, the George Wallace move-

ment, on the right. They are feeding each other's extremism. They are on a collision course, and yet, they are also allies in their attack on reason and on the traditional institutions. Both want to destroy the power center whether it is called Federal Government, City Hall, School Board, University Administration, or more mythically, the Establishment—the radical Left, because it believes that these power centers must be destroyed before a better society based on new values can be built, and the Negro militants because they believe that the centralized authority is the barrier to their demands. The Wallaceites, too, want to emasculate it because to them it is the instrument that coerces them to yield their privileges to the Negro. The radical Left temporarily accepted Senator Eugene McCarthy's leadership, but he proved too much of a purist and crusader and not enough of a leader.

Right Finds Leader

The reactionary Right on the other hand, found a shrewd, ambitious, determined leader in George Wallace, who, in the course of the election campaign, proved to be a formidable campaigner and a clever exploiter of burning racial frustrations. His movement is a form of Fascism in Populist clothing. At the start of the campaign, his audiences were obviously lower middle class, but by now they usually include a heavy sprinkling of middle class people. As was to be ex-

pected, it was the right-wing movement that gained during the election campaign because George Wallace chose to use the traditional political channels to assert himself and his party. The New Left, too disorganized, too resentful of the ordinary political processes, prefers to impose its will by various forms of protests or by force.

Center Is Narrowed

This polarization at the two political extremes has, of course, narrowed the political center, which has given this country its broad political stability. The next President is almost certain to be a minority President which in times as these, when he needs popular backing for unpopular measures, can become a serious handicap.

The extremists not only delight in instability, but they can take comfort from the fact that together they have strangled the most important force in American politics of the last 35 years—welfare liberalism. To the Left it has been an obstacle to revolutionary change, to the Right a conspiracy by the intellectuals of the eastern establishment to deprive the citizenry of certain basic rights and privileges. Another reason why Right and Left loathe it is that civil rights liberalism commands that Negroes shall be integrated or be equal with white people whether the white people or the Negroes want it.

There is a growing number of Negroes today who don't want it—they want

Black Power—and a growing number of white people willing to resist it, they want to preserve white power, hence, a new confrontation is developing to which the New Deal liberalism offers no new answers.

Humphrey Is Victim

The demise of the New Deal liberalism is also the explanation for Mr. Humphrey's own malaise since he is its last authentic exponent. Fewer and fewer people now believe that the great problems this country is facing can be solved by more governmental spending.

More and more people also blame the New Deal centralism for concentrating too much power in the Federal Government and not enough locally. To many this explains the weakness and the breakdown of local administrations today. They see it reflected in the disarray of the school system, the exorbitant costs of medical service, the inability of a teachers' union to come to a compromise agreement with a school board that does not want white teachers in a predominantly black community, in the slowdown strike of police and fireman in New York, in the doubt in the fairness of the political system and in the inability of the authorities to restore order and give the citizens a new sense of security.

Alas, no one of the candidates has been able to offer a new and calming vision of the future, or dared to call on Americans to make sacrifices, or to confront them with a challenge. Time and

again, people have said to me: "If we only had better men to choose from. Neither Humphrey nor Nixon sound like the man of the hour." Of course, even a nation as rich in talent as the American cannot easily and quickly overcome the loss of three men with outstanding leadership qualities—it still suffers from the losses of John F. AND Robert Kennedy and of Dr. Martin Luther King. So no great debate about the momentous issues that have unsettled this country has occurred.

No Easy Remedies

Without wanting to excuse this fact, one explanation is that there are no easy remedies. Only George Wallace offers a simple solution and that is to give all the powers to the police necessary to restore law and order.

Mr. Humphrey has been spending much time trying to reunite the party and on pointing up the weaknesses of his opponent. And Mr. Nixon, being in the lead, has shied away from initiatives that involved risks. Instead he concentrated on exploiting the obvious widespread desire for a change.

Choice on Faith

And so the people who were desperately searching for enlightenment feel disappointed and are reduced to making a choice based on faith and on the man's character and trust. That may be one reason why Mr. Humphrey has made some headway and why Mr. Nixon has reached a plateau, for Mr. Nixon still does not inspire

Unhappy Over Election

enough trust. What seems to play in his favor is the view, shared by enough people, expressed the other day by a man in Wisconsin who said: "Wallace wants to end violence with violence, Humphrey thinks he'll end it by giving in to the Negroes. Nixon is somewhere in between the two. He'll end the rioting fairly but firmly."

Curiously enough, in all my travels on this campaign, I have never met anybody who gave the Democrats recognition for having maintained prosperity for eight years. There were two recessions under the Eisenhower Administration. This nation is taking its material well-being for granted. Just as the new generation is largely unaware of the effects of World War II, so it is also unaware of what a serious economic recession would mean. Fortunately, the rise of the Wallace movement does not coincide with a recession, for then Fascism would have a real chance of coming to power here.

Painful Transition

This country is going through a painful and explosive transition. Powerful new political forces are straining at stale concepts, outdated institutions and old value judgments. People who for a long time have felt unrepresented and unlistened to are trying to assert themselves. There is some truth in their claim that it was easy for the minority of influential middle class liberals to be generous in advancing the cause of the Negro because they are

still sheltered from the social and material consequences; the lower classes are not. Nobody has yet denied Wallace's assertion that only six members of Congress send their children to public schools (in the American sense).

The new economic and social factors underlying this turmoil are breaking the old molds—new political realignments are in the making; a more self-centered international outlook is taking hold; a decade when Americans will be primarily preoccupied with themselves is ahead. This country has packed more progress in the economic, social and political fields in the last 30 years than has ever happened in

the history of any other country and a reaction has set in.

That the candidates did not produce any new interesting ideas in this campaign—not only of the intellectually defensive nature of this campaign—a sort of fear seemed to prevail that new ideas are too risky because nobody is too sure of the state of mind of this country and a dangerous third party is running interference—but also of a certain lack of confidence the two leading candidates have in themselves. People, left uncertain, therefore will not approach Election Day with great expectations, but a resignation that difficult times are still ahead.