

(Companion article, by Priscilla McMillan, pasted separately.)

The Presidency: Too Soon to Love Again

By Albert Gore

CLEVELAND—What is it that gives one such an eerie feeling about the 1972 Presidential election? The choosing of a President should be a joyous, exultant event in our self-governing society, the very epitome of democracy.

Yet, the whole process now appears desultory—dull and spiritless. The traditional zest and sport in American politics has deserted the country. The political climate is fraught with doubt and antagonism, a lack of faith and confidence. Pretensions of patriotism, recrimination, littleness of spirit and mind have spread across the land like waters from a flash flood.

But why? Not, in my view, because the majority of our people do not desire change; not because Americans are satisfied in a sense of continuing doom without a discernible program either to stop a calamitous war or to pursue the existing policy to success; not with the current condition of

crime, corruption and social injustice; not because present national leadership is either inspiring or endearing.

Something deeply important, then, must be present or lacking. I think it is the latter. People yearn for a President they can love—they have not had one they could love since John F. Kennedy's assassination. And they hoped, perhaps only in an undefined or even in a subconscious way, that the 1972 election would fill their void.

People yearn for a President to satisfy needs that may appear the very opposite of politics. They want to believe the President is a good man and they turn to him for a sense that things will be all right. He is a refuge, a source of reassurance that their jobs, their personal rights and their future will be secure.

Then, too, people want a sense of legitimacy in the Presidency—they expect him to be a master politician who yet remains above politics.

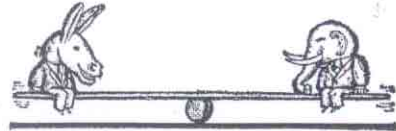
But, in 1972, fate has somehow dealt with them capriciously—they feel jilted, cheated. Neither Mr. Nixon nor Mr. McGovern fills their sense of need.

President Nixon's cleverness is widely recognized, too vividly for him to be popularly accepted as above politics. Senator McGovern proved his political skill in the primaries, but he lost his image of gallantry in the power plays of the convention, in the unfortunate Eagleton affair, and in compromising with the party regulars.

The challenger's increasing stridency has indicated a desperation in his candidacy while the incumbent remained strategically ensconced in the White House lest, perhaps, the "re-

elect the President" campaign becomes confused with Richard M. Nixon.

Though McGovern is perceived, I believe, as a moral man, his performance has not yet widely stirred confidence in his capacity to lead. Nixon has undoubtedly demonstrated an ability to use the power of the Presidency, but leaves unsettling doubts as to the rightful way of acting in the place.



ISSUES 1972

Without a measure of enthusiasm or the degree of adulation which many (including me, I admit) desire, we have the opportunity and duty to pause and reassess our social order, to examine the extent to which the claims and credibilities of each candidate are material or myth, illusion or issue; and to ponder the manner and style by which each candidate tends to justify or to impair public confidence in government—and thus either sustain or subvert true self-government.

By these measurements, one may choose for President between the tried-and-found-wanting or the dubious of change and promise. However timorous, I choose the ray of hope in change and for peace.

Albert Gore, former Democratic Senator from Tennessee, is author of "Let the Glory Out."