

# Election a Mirror for the Nation

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The election tells us quite a lot about the American people—most of it reassuring. Taken as a whole, they see a lot out of one eye. You can fool them, but not for long and not everywhere. They are skeptical and practical, allergic to big ideas, big-shots and big-months, non-ideological, nonpartisan and nonflappable—the whole fair and sensible.

## News Analysis

They didn't give anybody a mandate to do anything in this election, except maybe to cut out the nonsense and get on with the nation's business. They elected some dubs and bores, maybe because there were so many of them on the ballot, and they fired some good old souls, but in general they gave us a better balance between the parties in the Congress and the statehouses, and mainly they gave us a chance for a new beginning.

Unfortunately, President Nixon apparently didn't get the message. Even after he had divided his party, violated all his calls for unity, morality, and integrity, he was still claiming he had won a great victory and strengthened his hand at home and abroad, and particularly in the Senate.

"I believe our hand has been strengthened," he said, speaking in party and ideological terms, and while this is the usual partisan nonsense, one thing is fairly clear. Even his own colleagues in the White House and the Cabinet were not swallowing this baloney. They were looking very hard and objectively at the future rather than at the propaganda of the past campaign.

Maybe this is the main point. It was a disgraceful and divisive campaign, planned and

## Image of a Sensible, Fair Voter Is Seen in the Results

led by the only two men elected by all the people to unify the nation, but let it go. The voters refused to be bamboozled or frightened by the President and the Vice President, or persuaded by the Democrats or the commentators. They picked their men across party and ideological lines. They gave everybody a chance, conservatives and "radical liberals" alike, warning them all not to take the people for granted, but repudiating neither party and giving common sense another chance.

It could easily have gone the other way. If the voters had bought either (1) the Nixon-Agnew line that the Democrats invented sin, crime, sex, war, dope and smut, or (2) the Democratic propaganda that the Republicans loved the rich, and unemployment, and hated the poor, the blacks and the young, we would really be in trouble this morning. But instead, they seem to have said that we are all very human and fallible, not very smart, not very wise, liable to do mean and foolish things, but maybe capable of doing better next time.

Accordingly, the question now is how to put things back together. The quicker this squalid election is forgotten the better. The facts are plain. The nation is confronted with momentous problems. It has a war to end. Almost 6 per cent of our people are unemployed—and almost 30 per cent of our young city blacks are out of work. Bankruptcies are running at the rate of 250 a week. The economy has run over the poor with inflation, and then backed up and run over them again with deflation.

Overseas, we are at another critical and even historic point in the arms race, which is now costing the world the staggering sum of \$180.3-billion a year, but there is now a chance in the new U.S.-U.S.S.R. talks in Helsinki to get this tragic madness under control. And in Berlin and the Middle East, the two really dangerous flash-points in the contemporary world, diplomatic talks are proceeding.

None of these problems can be resolved in the vindictive and wounding political atmosphere of the last few weeks in this country. There is only one President, and he cannot deal with any of these problems on his own. Therefore there must be trust between the White House and the new Congress.

Similarly, there is no way for the Democrats, with their new power in the state capitals, and their proper concern for the unemployed, the poor, the blacks and the young, to deal with the economic or the generation gap without the help of the White House. Therefore, somehow there must be a political truce for a while and some honest talk for a change between the leaders of Congress and the President's official family.

## Restoring Communication

It will not be easy to establish new lines of communication between the Administration and its critics on Capitol Hill and in the press after this election campaign, for the President and the Vice President have argued that the opposition was a barrier to good government and the security and well-being of the nation.

How, after this, can Mr. Agnew preside effectively over

the Senate of the United States, many of whose members he has tried to defeat? How does the President himself get back into trustful private conversation with powerful Democratic Senators and Representatives whose political careers he tried to destroy?

Stated this way, reconciliation with the new Congress seems unlikely if not impossible, but the politics of this country are intensely human and very odd. (For example, the "effete East" did better by Mr. Agnew and Mr. Nixon than the South, or the silent majority of the Middle West or the West.)

Much depends now on how the President reads the election results. His first reaction was appalling. He was right back on the old theme that somehow he had "won" because he had lost less than most Presidents lose in off-term elections. He looked at the returns as if they were a mathematical problem, without any philosophical or personal meaning, but while he usually makes these self-serving political pronouncements, he usually comes back in private to the realities of his Presidential job.

During the campaign he had a talk at the White House with the Democratic Speaker of the House of Representatives, John McCormack. We are going to hit you hard in this campaign, he said, and if you don't hit us hard I won't respect you. But after it is all over, he added, come down to the White House for breakfast and let's talk about where we are.

This is about where we are now, and the chances are that, after all the silly claims of victory on both sides, the Administration and the Democratic opposition will, like the voters, deal with realities.

## More Confident Opposition

The President tried to overwhelm the opposition in this election, but he failed. Now he will probably minimize his role of party leader and go back to being President, and the chances are he will get the cooperation of a much more confident and optimistic Democratic opposition.

The President has never had any trouble with Mike Mansfield, the Democratic leader of the Senate, whom he sees privately much more than is generally realized. The Democrats are going to have a new Speaker of the House of Representatives in Congressman Carl Albert of Oklahoma, so there will be a new Democratic team in the House with the retirement of John W. McCormack.

This will really give the President a chance for a new beginning, with a new majority, new leadership, and new members of the Congress. It will be interesting to see what he does with it. He has tried the old politics, which brought him to the pinnacle of American political life, but they didn't work in this election. They divided the country, revived the Democratic party, dramatized Senator Edmund S. Muskie of Maine and Mayor Lindsay, who may be his major political opponents in 1972, re-established Democratic power in the statehouses, and confronted him with a wholly new problem of how to govern the country in the next two years.

Mr. Nixon was very quiet about all this when the election returns first came in, and then, like Mr. Agnew, made the best of it publicly, but privately, what lessons will he draw from the campaign for the future? This is the critical question for a President who now has to deal with the old policy problems and the new political realities.