

Credibility: Someone isn't telling the truth. Mr. Nixon or Mr. McGovern? Check One.

By Patrick J. Buchanan



Klaus Albrechtson

WASHINGTON—Earlier this year, parallels were drawn between the pre-convention campaigns of George McGovern and Barry Goldwater. The comparisons were neither invidious nor invalid. Both men—one of the left, the other of the right—were movement politicians. Unlike a John F. Kennedy or a Richard M. Nixon, who relentlessly pursued and won their party's nomination, Senators Goldwater and McGovern had their nominations "captured" on their behalf—captured by an army of volunteers, motivated by ideology, hungrier, better disciplined and better organized than the Establishment they sought to displace.

Unlike Presidents Kennedy and Nixon, neither of these small-state Senators could have seized their party's nomination and machinery, had they not been chosen instruments of significant political movements.

But the comparisons that were valid in the spring are demeaning to Senator Goldwater in the fall. For, agree or disagree, Barry Goldwater went down to defeat in November, 1964, unapologetically, uncompromising in his public commitment to conservative positions and principles.

Senator McGovern, on the other hand, has made public recantation the leitmotiv of his campaign. Excepting only defense, one is hard pressed to name a single position taken by Mr. McGovern to win the nomination that has not, since Miami Beach, been trimmed or hedged or abandoned altogether.

The guaranteed income that Mr. McGovern introduced in the Senate was put over the side with George Wiley in Miami Beach. The \$1,000-per-person grant, with the concomitant tax program to redistribute the wealth, was quietly interred on Wall Street two months later. As for the 100 per cent



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tax on estates, followed by the 77 per cent on estates—neither of them has been heard from in weeks. Abortion is no longer a matter between "a doctor and his patient." Today it is not even a matter worth discussion between a candidate and his constituency. The pledges of quotas of Federal jobs to blacks and Chicanos were jettisoned when quotas became a national issue.

The space shuttle that was a "foolish project" in the Florida primary does not seem so foolish when campaigning in Houston in September.

Unconditional amnesty for all who refused to serve in Vietnam is now fudged. No longer should we consider regulating marijuana "along the lines of alcohol."

On Southeast Asia, there is ongoing debate among Republican researchers as to whether Mr. McGovern will keep bases in Thailand and ships offshore until the prisoners are released—or whether he will remove the troops and ships "on the faith" that the prisoners will subsequently be released. Using primary sources alone, each side has a cogent case. Not for nothing is the McGovern speech-writing team laboring under the sobriquet, "The Waffle Shop."

As for Mr. McGovern's June declaration: "We're not going to win in the fall if we forget the pledges and the commitments we made in the spring," he should save it for the Al Smith Dinner; it will bring down the house.

With his reputation for political consistency and candor already in grave peril, Mr. McGovern's reputation for personal credibility seems headed in the same direction. The solemn pledge to the women to support the South Carolina challenge was dishonored the evening of the day it was made. The flat assertion that no instruction had been given to Mr. Salinger was, as flatly, retracted and reversed not two hours later. And the enormous gap between Mr. McGovern's words and Mr. McGovern's deeds in the Eagleton affair was summed up nicely by Garry Wills, who wrote:

"Senator McGovern is giving sanctity

a bad name. While he blessed the crowds with his right hand, his left one was holding Eagleton's head under water till the thrashing stopped. We'll all know we're in trouble if he should be elected and take his oath of office by saying he supports the Constitution 1,000 per cent."

In 1971, Mr. McGovern, in a fundraising letter, wrote boldly to his prospective constituents, "Quite frankly, I am not a 'centrist' candidate." His awkward efforts in the past month to imitate one only call to mind Dr. Johnson's dog trying to walk on its hind legs.

Instead of denying his convictions, Senator McGovern might have done better by defending them.

Many commentators contended that had Mr. McGovern continued to run as the candidate of the "new politics" he would have been administered a shellacking by Mr. Nixon. Perhaps.

But the people who supported him were, at the least, entitled to have their somewhat unorthodox views on income redistribution, neo-isolationism and reversal of priorities aired and articulated—as they have not been by their erstwhile champion who has spent the last month running as though he coveted most the office of—not President of the United States but—Special Prosecutor in the Waterbug Case.

It was impolitic of Senator Goldwater to stand in the Cow Palace and summarily dismiss the recalcitrant Eastern liberals just defeated at the convention. But assuredly the moment was a more honest one than that unforgettable scene of George McGovern emerging from lunch at the LBJ Ranch to declare the meeting "one of the most treasured moments of my life."

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By Adlai E. Stevenson 3d

WASHINGTON—No public figure, no matter what his party, can be happy when charges of political dishonesty, and the evidence of it, are in the air.

When the clouds of suspicion and mistrust gather over Washington, their shadows spread not only over one man or one party or one institution, they darken the entire political landscape. Those clouds now hang over Washington; over the White House; over the public and political conduct of President Nixon and his highest appointees.

At first the clouds were no bigger than a man's hand: a hint of fat political contributions unreported; a wheedling letter from a White House aide, on White House stationery, to his brother's business clients.

But in four years those clouds have darkened into thunderheads. They hang so thickly now that no one can ignore them; no rain dance of unpersuasive denials can dispel them; no huffing and puffing from campaign headquarters can blow them away.

Only truth—not empty denials—can dispel suspicion. Only candor—not bombast—can clear away the doubts.

But in the absence of forthright explanation, what shall the people conclude about the dealings of Mr. Nixon and his party?

What is at stake when charges of corruption fly—more than the survival or prestige of our party or set of politicians—is the confidence of our citizens, their faith and trust. In no Administration in recent memory have charges been so thick; charges of wrongdoing; of omissions; of catering to special interests. And surely not in recent memory have the explanations been so pallid; the efforts to confuse and obscure so frantic.

The people are left to conclude what they will. And they will conclude that Mr. Nixon's Administration, because it will not permit an impartial investigation of the charges against it, has a great deal to hide. They are left to conclude that government of the people, by the people, for the people has given way, in Mr. Nixon's Washington, to the politics of wealth and stealth. And they are left to conclude that the era of the New Deal and the era of the Fair Deal have given way to Mr. Nixon's era: the Era of the Deal.

There is another word for all this: It is corruption. I speak not only of the corruption which inevitably ensues when money-changers invade the temples of government. That form of corruption is as familiar as Teapot Dome. It is, ultimately, a matter for the courts.

There are other forms of political corruption which are more subtle but equally insidious. One is the invasion of every public enterprise by partisan politics. We have witnessed, in the past four years, the transmutation of the Department of Justice into a branch of campaign headquarters. The Secretaries of State and Defense have hit the campaign trail; they routinely issue partisan political pronouncements—a new and dismal twist.

Government statistics about jobs and crime are manipulated shamelessly for maximum political mileage. The very celebration of our nation's bicentennial has been invaded by partisan hacks and corporate fastbuck artists. This sort of perversion—this corruption—may build temporary majorities. But it destroys the enduring faith of the people in their institutions.

A second form of corruption invades our politics when high officials subvert the public interest in the name of private interests.

It is not necessary that men be evil to betray the public trust. They betray it when they are blind, after too many years in the dim light of corporate boardrooms, to distinctions between what is good for the country and what



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is good for them alone.

A third and final corruption is the corruption of arrogance: the corruption which infects our politics when our highest leaders simply will not speak forthrightly to the people. Again and again, Mr. Nixon has invoked the doctrine of executive privilege to frustrate Congressional investigations. He has refused, with an imperious disdain unprecedented in the White House, to meet the press and submit to their questions.

The President speaks, when he speaks at all to the people, from the security of a television studio, or with the help of scriptwriters, stage managers and make-up men.

We have come to expect a certain amount of artifice in our politics. But when stagecraft becomes the principal means of encounter between the President and the people, the result is not lively public discourse but a series of Presidential monologues.

Thus government becomes, not a relationship between a leader and his people but a performance between actor and audience. Leadership becomes a gesture of artifice, not truth; the President's acts seem more the posturing of royalty than the earnest efforts of a public servant accountable to the people.

And that is the final corruption: indifference to the people.

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