

# The Republican Prospect

By Patrick J. Buchanan

Buchanan was a speechwriter and special assistant to President Nixon, whose staff he joined in 1966. He is the author of "The New Majority."

**T**HE FATE of the Republican Party and the shape of presidential politics in 1976 hinge now upon President Ford's interpretation of the debacle of Tuesday last.

If the President decides that the nation, in rejecting Republicans, has endorsed the philosophy, politics and program of the national Democratic Party—and if he turns his White House leftward to accommodate the trend—there will be a third party on the right in 1976.

The President's reading of the election returns will be evident in the budget and State of the Union address. His agenda includes yet another laundry list of "bold new programs"—broadened national health insurance, a \$3,500 guaranteed annual income, a huge federal employment program, a new consumer agency, and higher

taxes on the middle and upper class and corporations to pay the bill—he will leave a vacuum on the political right. Which vacuum will not long remain unfilled.

Tuesday's election contained no mandate for the program of the Democratic Party; the Democrats offered no program. Tuesday was rather Voters' Retaliation Day, for having to endure economic stagnation, double-digit inflation and 18 months of Watergate. Notwithstanding the arrival of dozens of liberal Democrats in Washington in January, the nation is not moving to the left.

Not only the pollsters Yankelovich, Sindlinger and Gallup, but the Democratic candidates themselves are aware, if Republicans are not, that the national trend remains to the right. Gary Hart swept Colorado on the rhet-

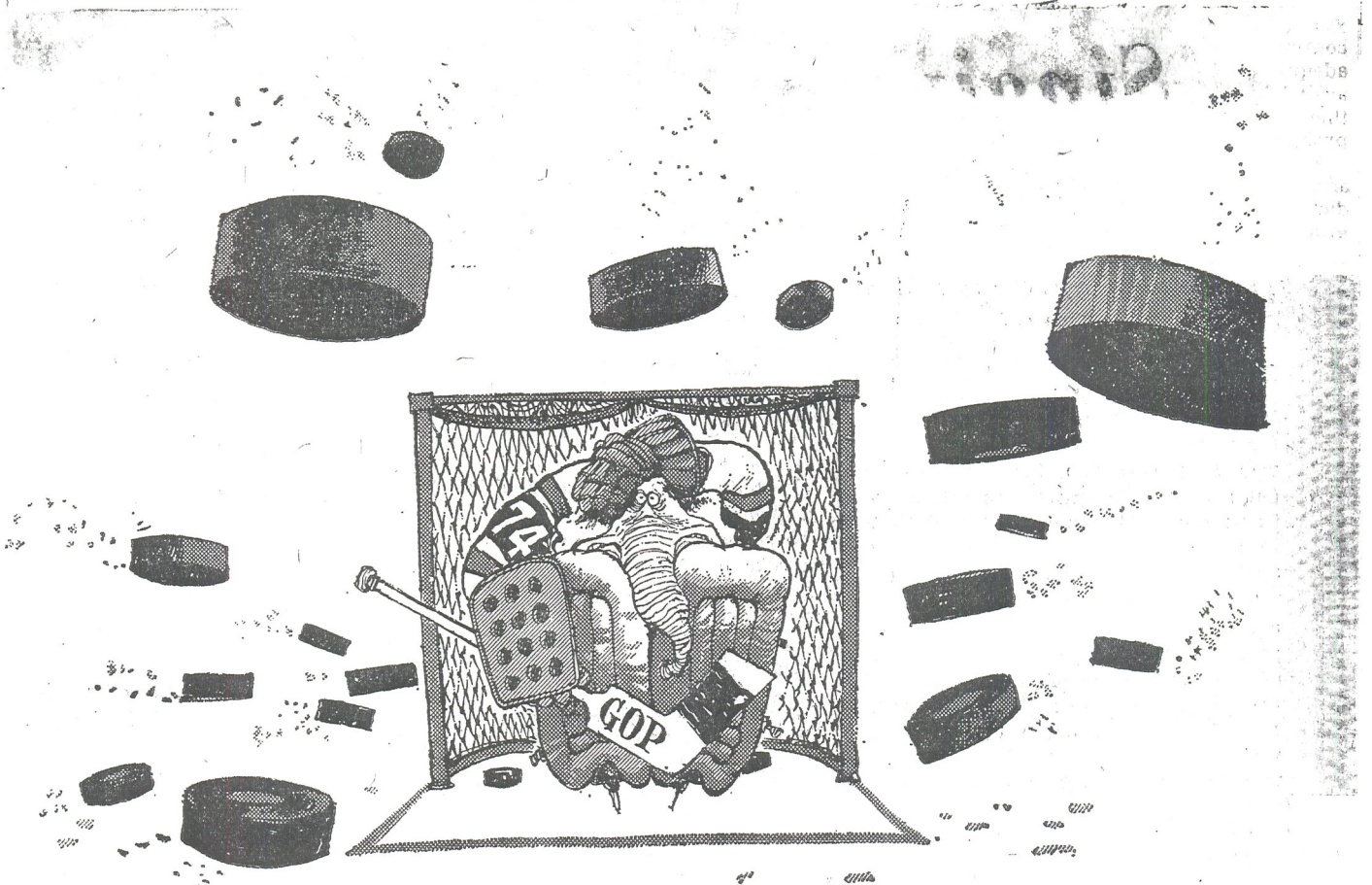
oric of Barry Goldwater; and George McGovern, *mirabile dictu*, discovered midway in his narrow re-election campaign, and rather late in life, that he was a "New Conservative." Not since Harold Hughes declared Brother Colson a "baby in Christ" has there been a more heartening conversion.

Tuesday's election told us what the voters were against, not what they were for.

## Learning From Defeat

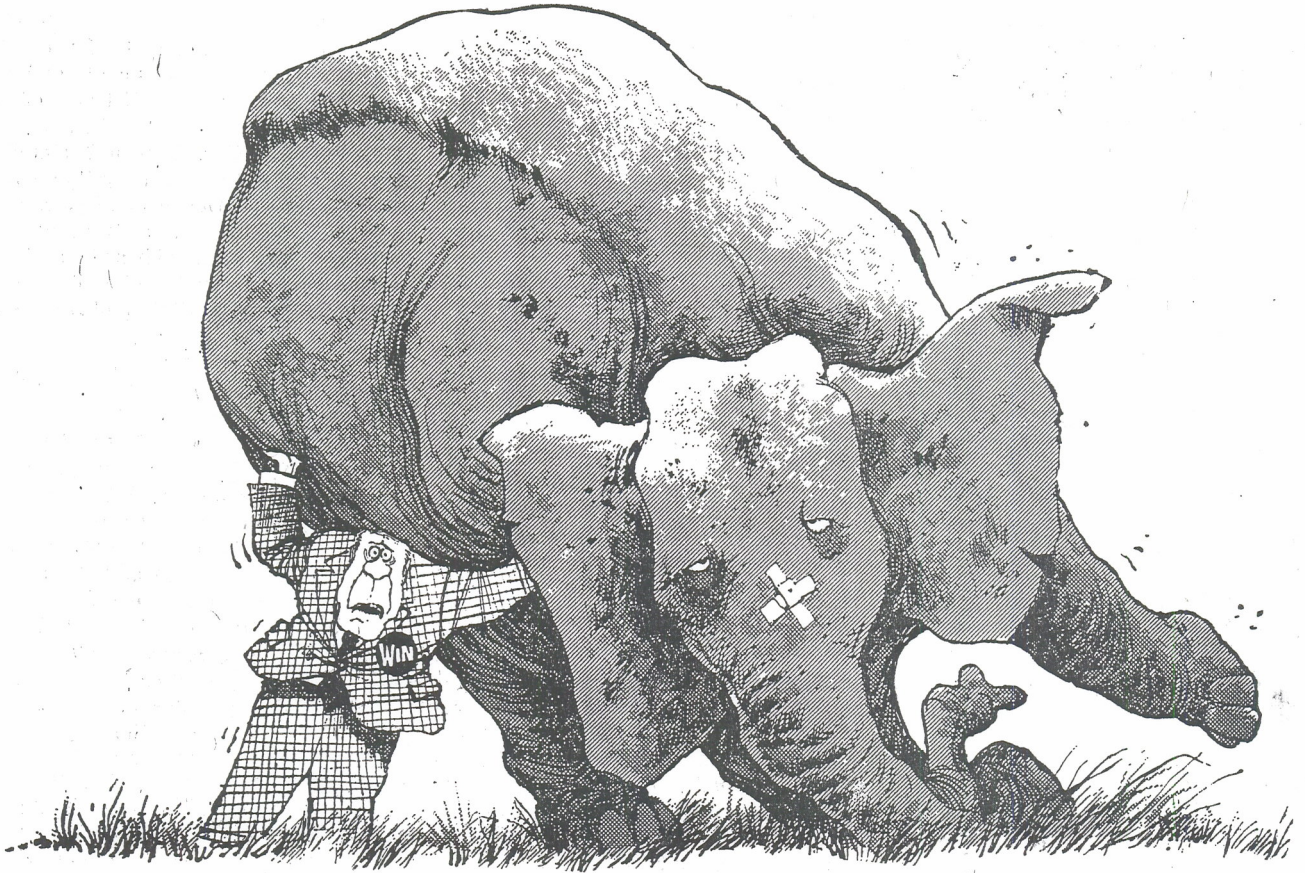
**N**EVERTHELESS, defeat has its lessons as well as victory. With Watergate and the pardon, with amnesty and the off-year tradition against the party in power, losses in the Republican column were inevitable; Tuesday's rout was not.

See ELECTION, Page C4



MacNelly in the Richmond News Leader





MacNelly in the Richmond News Leader

### ELECTION, From Page C1

There was one central issue Tuesday: the economy. And the public, victimized by economic stagnation and inflation, had before it two possible suspects to accuse: the Democratic-controlled Congress and the Republican-controlled White House.

Upon taking office, President Ford should have, if necessary, broken publicly with the economic policies of his predecessor, and sent to Congress an uninterrupted string of presidential vetoes of appropriations legislation, defying the Congress to override, and taking the quarrel to the country for resolution. He would have put the Republican Party on the offensive nationally, with the Democrats forced to explain why increasing federal spending would not increase inflation. Instead, we had the traditional off-year Republican boilerplate about "big spenders," electing an "inflation-proof Congress," and that old chestnut, "preserving the two-party system."

Compare 1974 with the previous off-year exercise, 1970's seven weeks' war against the "radical liberals," of happy memory. With Cambodia and Kent State still on the mind of a war-weary public and headed into the trough of the recession of 1970, the White House decided that rather than defend itself on the economic issue, it would go on the offensive on the "social issue," exploiting a hundred and one foolish and extreme statements by Democratic incumbents pandering to the children of the counterculture. From Day One, the Democratic Party was on the defensive; the "social issue" dominated; the economic issue was never made. Candidates like Sen. Tunney, Stevenson and Kennedy spent their campaigns rewriting their ads to emphasize "law and order," getting in

and out of police cars, stressing their war records and denouncing "campus commandos," in imitation of Mr. Agnew.

True, the campaign was initiated too early; the vein was overworked and the rhetoric overdone. But, at the close of the 1970 campaign, the party in power had lost 5 per cent of its strength in the House and added 5 per cent in the Senate: a standoff at the congressional level. Compare that with the casualty lists pouring into the White House last Wednesday.

### Learning From Victory

**B**Y REGISTRATION, voter identification and sentiment, the American people incline toward the Democratic Party. Clear and compelling reasons must be present for them to go elsewhere—as they were in the presidential race of 1972.

And it is the success of 1972, not the defeat of 1974, to which Republicans should look as they enter the presidential politics of 1976. The great victory of the Democratic Party of last Tuesday was based upon the votes of between one-fourth and one-fifth of the electorate, nothing remotely approaching the 47 million votes that gave the Republican Party, in 1972, its greatest political victory in 50 years.

Enough time and rhetoric have been given over in the Ford White House to what was wrong about the campaign of 1972. Some thought should be given, soon, to what was right.

Despite Tuesday, the national verdict on the philosophy and program of the Democratic Party, embraced at Miami Beach, stands. That convocation of practitioners of the New Politics, and birds of assorted plumage, together with party positions on issues from welfare to defense, amnesty to crime,

marijuana to abortion, drove working and middle-class Democrats by the millions in the direction of the Republican Party.

With Tuesday, these Democrats have not suddenly embraced what they deplored. Thus, the new Democratic Congress is today far to the left of the country that elected it to office. And if the President moves in that direction, mistakenly, he will be as vulnerable in the fall of 1976 as the marginal freshmen Democrats of the 94th Congress.

And despite all the chatter about the "New Conservatism," the Democratic Party has been on the same old sauce for 40 years and, come February, it will be bellied up against the same old bar. Once in power, congressional Democrats have nothing else to fall back upon other than the same old poli-

tics of the New Deal: expand the benefits, increase the size, power and authority of government, spend and spend, and elect and elect. The election returns were not even completed before they fell off the wagon. "The victory is not tonight," declared party chairman Strauss, the "victory will begin when we start passing legislation."

And what legislation does the incoming class of '75 have in mind? Tax relief for the lower income, increasing the tax burden on the middle and upper income and the corporations, new regulations on industry and commerce, and savaging the oil companies—all of which have less to do with solving the nation's economic problems than with satisfying the appetite of their ideology.

### A Party on Welfare

**A**S GEORGE WALLACE'S promenade through the primaries and Mr. Nixon's landslide showed, the nation has moved to the right. This is not



a conservative trend of the kind that will produce a sudden run on the works on Edmund Burke, or double the newsstand sales of the National Review. It is indeed as much a counter-reformation as a conservative movement.

The people want their politicians to reduce spending and taxes. They want an end to government-forced integration in housing, and in the schools through forced busing; they want discipline and religion back in the public school system, and Eldridge Cleaver and sex education out. They want something done about pornography, drugs, crime and the permissive and failing criminal justice system in the United States, which a thousand "Law and Order" candidates have promised and none produced. They are weary of having their middle-class — bourgeois, if you will—values constantly denigrated. They are unenthusiastic about militant women, militant Indians and militant blacks.

There are the potential foot soldiers of a Republican majority. But not if the Republicans insist upon emulating the follies of the Democratic convention of 1972 by requiring, at the '76 convention, a specific quota of, or proportional representation for, women, blacks, Chicanos, Piutes and Comanches. It is said that the new Republican chairperson, the charming Mary Louise Smith, selected to hold the cigar when it exploded on Nov. 5, favors the Rule 29 reforms. One trusts not.

The Republican Party will not die of Tuesday's wounds. Great political parties do not pass away until there is a successor visible in the wings. There is none today.

Indeed, the Republican Party has planned well for its old age—having had itself placed upon the welfare rolls, without the work requirement. Under the campaign reform enacted this fall, every four years the Republican National Committee will be given from the Treasury \$2 million for its convention and \$20 million for its campaign—so long as it does not raise its own funds. In exchange for this guaranteed income, the GOP acquiesced in the political neutralization of its primary advantage, the economic support of wealthy contributors, and agreed to leave the primary advantage of the Democratic Party, the political power of organized labor, virtually untouched.

The GOP acceded as well to a limit on spending in future congressional elections, so low that future Republican challengers to the 292 Democrats who dominate the new House will be at considerable pains to make an effective race.

The Republican Party will survive. But a political party which, out of fear of adverse publicity, would acquiesce in punitive legislation designed to freeze it into permanent minority status, is a party close to losing the will to live.

Entering the politics of 1976, the GOP will carry with it enormous burdens. In the eyes of many, it is not simply the party of big business, but the party of hard times and, now, the party of Watergate. If the Republican Party is to regain the allegiance of the majority of Americans, then it must begin anew to affirm, articulate and defend the values and basic beliefs of working and middle-class America. Just as FDR's Democratic Party be-

came the chosen instrument of protest for millions against the incumbent establishment of commercial, business and financial power, so the Republican Party should become the vehicle of protest against the incumbent establishment which dominates the academy, the foundations, the media, the bureaucracy and the courts.

These are the institutions which in the eyes of many millions of Americans are becoming more and more arrogant and distant, less and less accountable and responsive to the legitimate complaints and the grievances of the common man.

If the Republican Party, however, is ever to forge a new coalition, it must set aside the politics of "conciliation, compromise, cooperation and consensus."

FDR's great Democratic coalition, which in some states survives to this day, was launched on a wave of demagoguery and invective against the alleged commercial oppressors of the

common man.

And both FDR and HST's politics of confrontation and conflict over the issues were applauded relentlessly by those who find such tactics, when utilized by the Republican Party, "divisive" and destructive of national unity. "Dangerous polarization" is the phrase development to describe the normal divisions in the body politic, when the majority disagrees with the prevailing liberal orthodoxy.

### The Politics of Conflict

ON THE NATIONAL level, the Democratic Party is not invincible. In only one presidential election in the last 30 years has it achieved a clear majority of the popular vote. It has no coherent philosophy or program which has captured the enthusiasm or imagination of the American people. Under the pressure of the new and marginal democrats of the Class of '75, what the new Congress is likely to produce is more certain to exacerbate and deepen the economic crisis in this country than resolve it. And the Democratic Party has no candidate to inspire a whole nation.

Sen. Henry Jackson was not even a useful sparring partner for the governor of Alabama two years ago. As for Sen. Walter Mondale, Washington wit Mark Russell had it right when he observed that after a year's intense campaigning for the presidency, 2 per cent of the Democratic Party favored the Minnesota Democrat for the nomination — and 9 per cent identified Mondale as a city just outside Pasadena.

But the Democratic Party will not defeat itself in 1976; it has to be done by Republicans. And it cannot be accomplished with the politics of consensus and compromise; it must be done with political confrontation and conflict, over issues, over principles, over politics, over alternate directions in which the society should go! The Republican Party needs to stress its disagreements and differences with the man on the other side of the aisle, as well as its cordial, personal relations. Faced with the choice between a political liberal and pale imitation, the nation will purchase the genuine article.

Is President Ford the kind of candidate to forge that kind of coalition? The answer is doubtful. There is probably no more hard-working, honorable and essentially decent man near the apex of American politics. But, by experience, Gerald Ford is a man of the Hill. Having spent a quarter-century in the cloakroom, enjoying the camaraderie and close friendship of leaders on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Ford is neither by experience nor personal temperament equipped to convince Democrats by the millions to throw aside their allegiance to the Democratic Party and vote Republican. He, and most of the advisers he brought with him, are less interested in what some "mandate of 1972" said 24 months ago than what the editorial writers and reporters are saying this afternoon.

The President is the genuine Mr. Nice Guy of American politics. But the Republican Party, and the nation, need more than a nice guy. They need genuine leadership. And America today needs conservative leadership more than it needs Republican leadership. And if the latter will not provide the former, then someone else will reach to catch the falling flag.