

The Significance of this Election

Of all events in the history of the United States the outcome of the last election may well prove to be the most significant since the revolution of 1776. The underlying issue of the recent campaign was the conflict of two utterly opposed philosophies of government. It was not, as in previous campaigns, a conflict between two major parties which, while they were divided on issues of secondary value, stood united with respect to the fundamental philosophy of government. Neither of the platforms of the major parties clearly formulated the issue of the fundamental philosophical conflict. As is inevitable in practical politics, the platforms were largely determined with an eye to political expediency. But the profound issue is there none the less. The mass of the people have spoken their decision in no uncertain terms and, in this case, this means an essential revolution. It is marvelous that such an extreme revolution could be effected without blood-shed. This is one fact for which we may all well feel thankful. But while the mass movement of the people was decisive, as it is always decisive ultimately in any government whatever its form, yet there are very few in this mass who are aware of the significance of their decision. Doubtless the vast majority saw only the immediate interests that came close to them individually, for average human nature is so constituted. But knowingly or unknowingly, the overwhelming majority of the American people have registered a decision that may radically alter the form of American destiny for many generations and, mayhap, even until the end of the cycle of western culture. It is well then to take account of the direction that has been chosen by the majority and see what it implies in a fundamental sense.

In the first place, much more than the obvious political and economic issues is involved. The underlying change involves both philosophy and religion. And it is just in these latter aspects that the significance of the present revolution is best revealed. Now, first of all, we should recall just what were the decisive underlying currents that produced the revolution of 1776. The immediate issues of that day would not have been issues before the time of Luther when the general philosophico-religious outlook was such as to accept a central governmental and religious authority as the source of both temporal and spiritual rights and security. The policy of George the Third was well within the prerogatives recognized by the older religious philosophy. But the current of thought and valuation that was incarnated, on one side, in the movement initiated by Luther and, on the other, in those men who from Copernicus on initiated the new philosophy and science of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, taken in its broadest sense, effected a radical challenge of primary governmental and ecclesiastical authority. In its place there was established an entirely new philosophy which involved a number of important implications of which the following are of especial note:

a. The primary relationship between man and his God or his Soul is immediate and does not require the intermediation of of a Divine representative such as a Pope.

b. Man has an inviolate and primary right to question nature directly for the purpose of finding and formulating her laws in complete disregard of the pronouncements of ecclesiastical or secular authority.

c. The rights of man are inherent and derived directly from Nature.

From these three primary principles certain important consequences follow that have a direct bearing upon the limits of ecclesiastical and secular government. Part of these are as follows:

1. Man's rights, including life, liberty and pursuit of happiness, were not derived from any king or Pope or, any government or religious constituted authority
2. As a consequence both secular and religious government could be guilty of trespass for which either could be called before the Supreme Court of the natural man, could be tried, found guilty and condemned.
3. The Machiavellian doctrine that the ruler could violate the codes applicable to natural men and remain entirely within his moral rights was repudiated as being in principle utterly false. In stead governmental authority was to be judged by the same code of ethics that served as the norm of the natural man.
4. The true function of government was to act as a referee in dealing with the interactions between man and man. Further, all the powers and rights of government were delegated by natural man through mutual agreement. Government was not the original source of any rights whatsoever, whether in the secular or ecclesiastical sense.

It is easy to trace the influence of these principles or postulates in the writing of the American Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. The Declaration of Independence asserts a primary moral right inherent in natural man that had been violated by the government of George the Third. The armies of the Revolution of 1776 were, in effect, simply the executive officers of the Supreme Court of man carrying out the judgments of that Court. In the ethical sense, whether they succeeded or failed, they were entirely justified. If the philosophy on which the great American documents is true, then they are eternally right, and the American Revolution has the highest moral dignity. If that philosophy is false, then those documents were conceived in error and should be repudiated, while the Revolution of 1776 must be judged as moral crime.

The course of action of the so-called New Deal involves a challenge of the religious philosophy on which the Reformation, the Enlightenment, the Declaration of Independence, the American Constitution and the Revolution of 1776 was based. Its underlying principles may be listed, in part, as follows:

A. That primary authority inheres in government itself or in man regarded as a Collectivity, but not in natural man.

B. That natural man has no inherent rights but only such privileges as central authority may see fit to grant him.

C. An implication, not yet given explicit formulation, is that individual conscience has no primary authority in matters of conduct either religious or intellectual.

The two philosophies respectively of the so-called New Deal and original Americanism manifest as a conflict in the following forms, among others:

I. Authoritarianism vs. fundamental liberalism. The philosophy of the New Deal must be authoritarian. The idea that the rights of man come with him as an innate endowment of nature is liberal in the real sense of the word since the primary presumption is placed upon free individual choice of action.

II. Corporate entity vs. natural man. This is a practical point of very high importance. The idea of the corporate entity is common to all forms of the authoritarian states systems whether it is that of Russia, Germany, Italy, Spain or the present United States. Further, government as represented in the form of the great private corporation essentially belongs to this class. The corporate idea was not defeated in the recent election but came out supremely triumphant. The group of men who wield power at present in these large corporations unquestionably were defeated, but not the primary idea that they represent. The whole tendency of the New Deal philosophy is one which will act through the corporate entity as such. The class of men who will have power is changed and that is an essentially unimportant change.

Opposed to the corporate entity is the natural man. The corporate entity is a sort of artificial man created by legal devices. It is a man-made man made without a soul. Dominance of the corporate idea means the dominance of a sort of frankenstein and is, by its very nature, soulless. Changing the class of men who exercise the corporate power does not change this fact. Natural man in a fundamental mystical sense is a Divine manifestation or creation. Therefore, he not only has a soul but is soul. The natural rights philosophy must necessarily be as antagonistic to the dominance of the corporate entity as it was to the dominance of kings and popes.

III. Collectivism vs. Individualism. The New Deal philosophy clearly places collectivities in a superior position as compared to individuals. The final authority is the collectivity as represented by its head. The individual has no rights but only such privileges as the collectivity may chose to grant. This is a radical departure from the standpoint of the Reformation and the Enlightenment.

IV. Paternalism vs. self-determined responsibility. The New Deal philosophy assumes an essentially paternalistic attitude toward the members of the community. Essentially all members of the community becomes wards of the state. In the exercise

of this paternalistic relationship the individual is progressively denied the power of self-determined private contract and is told by the government what he may or may not do. The inevitable price of security and protection given by the paternal authority is that the individual member of the community is not only restricted in what he may or may not do, but also that he will be progressively compelled to act in certain ways, regardless of his own wishes, convictions or conscience.

Self-determined responsibility is a corollary of the philosophy of the Reformation and the Enlightenment. The price of individual freedom is individually accepted responsibility. It is this kind of self-chosen responsibility that makes possible the highest kind of moral dignity.

The signs all indicate that we are dealing with a phenomenon that is governed by a cyclic law. History shows us in both religion and civil government a tendency toward a certain dualistic action having the following modes:

- a. Old institutions reach a point of high chrystalization with a traditionally exercised authority.
- b. A new Light, such as Buddha, Christ or Luther, suddenly comes upon the stage with a message of Freedom that asserts that the autonomy of the individual man.
- c. There follows a creative period of new production with an extraordinarily large number of great individual men whose creative genius is released.
- d. Mass man becomes tired of the responsibility and other demands of Freedom and seeks the sheltering wing of authority.
- e. Authoritarian religions and governments arise and abrogate the freedom the masses despise and offer security at the price of obedience.
- f. Creative production starts to decay and the freezing or chrystalization of the society begins. This seems to be the longest cycle of all and covers the period from maturity to senility.

The significance of the recent landslide seems to me to be that we have definitely left the stage ~~symbolized by~~ represented by (c) above and are now moving in the stage of (d) and (e). The indication is that the production of creative genius will become less and less as the pressure of authority will be against the men who incarnate this genius. On the other hand, the masses will possibly begin to assimilate some of the fruits of the rich creative centuries that have just been completed. This need of the weaker masses for a slowing down of creative tension is probably the underlying force that has made the New Deal philosophy so popular.

It is entirely a mistake to think that the big business te-

executive has received the brunt of present defeat. He will continue to be used, or rather exploited, but he will be largely shorn of the opportunities and tools necessary for effective creative production. It is the creative genius that has not yet arrived together with those eagle-types of men who are profoundly devoted to the political philosophy symbolized by the name of Jefferson who are the men that have lost most. For these this is a day of tragedy and for them there remains only renunciation, so far as effectiveness on the stage of the world is concerned. These men who actually bring the greatest store of riches for mankind are the unseen, the really 'forgotten men', who face what is, in all probability, final defeat for generations in the objective sense. I am deeply thankful that Thomas A. Edison did not live long enough to share in this tragedy. If there are other such men living or to be born, who have not yet arrived, then they must face the fact of having been born too late. The new society has absolutely no compensation to offer the men who face this tragedy. For them there is no work left worthy of their powers. These are the men for whom my heart bleeds in this day.

I know of but one hope for the creative geniuses and the eagle-men who are born too late. They may, in effect, retire to the monastery and devote their powers to inward penetration. There is an inward world infinitely richer in its possibilities than this outer field of action, and the government of that inward dimension does not scorn the men who dare to know, to understand and to create. There is also plenty of room. There in that World there is not ingratitude. There is not a wrecking in a day of the fruitage of an idealism that has been painfully won over centuries of effort. There is not a mass of Lilliputian souls to turn upon the hands that have served them most richly to bite them. Further, old knowledge may be collected with new knowledge added to be stored against the day when once more strong and self-reliant men come once more a new and better culture.

As Spengler has already said, if the great soul is born too late to be creatively effective in the objective world, there is but one thing for him to do, and that is to adapt himself to historic fact. In such matters a facile optimism is but the defense of a childish soul. The adult soul faces tragedy frankly when the force of cycles compels. But the tragedy of one plane of life may be turned to Victory if the focus of attention is turned inward levels where the current of Real Life is on the upward swing.