

## **America's Pathetic Liberals**

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**Y**ou might think from the way the progressive press laments Al Gore's decision not to run for President again that there had been a genuine loss to liberalism in America.

But that's not quite the way I see it. Although few candidates ever came better groomed for high office than Mr. Gore, it is his performance in the 2000 presidential election that must be lamented.

Yes, he won the popular vote<sup>3/4</sup>teaching a new generation of Americans that being elected is no guarantee of winning under the arcane and anti-democratic provisions of America's 18th century Constitution. But with an opponent like George Bush, Mr. Gore should have won that vote by a large enough margin to make the entire business of Florida and the Supreme Court irrelevant. He should have, as they used to say, „mopped the floor with" an opponent as inarticulate, unimaginative, and with such a questionable background as Mr. Bush. But he didn't.

I remember, once or twice, hearing some tough words from Mr. Gore and thinking perhaps he had found his voice, only to be quickly disillusioned over the next day or two. Well, what could you expect from someone who chose to open his campaign by speaking about family values? "My God," we'd had an earful of that tired, insincere, and exploitative theme from Republicans over the previous couple of decades. You might say Mr. Clinton's impeachment was the family values impeachment, spearheaded, as it was, by a Republican leader who was sleeping with a staff member and a gross, pompous old phony who used to go nightclubbing with someone else's wife.

I know some will say the impeachment was about honesty, but, please, where is there recorded a single honest word from Gingrich, Hyde, Thurmond, Helms, Arme, DeLay, or Gramm?

Of course, apart from being the phony family values impeachment, it was an embarrassing demonstration of incompetence. All that massive effort and expense without so much as having taken a head count on the likelihood of success?

Mr. Gore's ineffectual campaign never touched this claptrap and hypocrisy. He was afraid to do so, even though he had a record as one of the straightest arrows in Washington. He simply ignored a massive, steaming heap of garbage that had been left on America's front lawn in Washington. Yet, he managed to blame Mr. Clinton for his loss.

It is with no regret whatever that I wave goodbye to Mr. Gore, not that I believe there is another at-all-likely candidate of any real merit waiting for his or her chance. (Note: I include her despite knowing that over vast stretches of America this is as grievous an error as denying the self-evident truth that all women should wear frilly aprons and bake cookies, à la Tipper. She won't be missed either. Is there not something hopeless in that ridiculous nickname for a middle-aged person?).

Now we have Mr. Lott's remarks about Strom Thurmond. Suddenly, there is a deluge of articles and comments about how terrible his words were, about how Republicans are in bed with racists. Well, Mr. Lott has a very long record, and Mr. Thurmond has an even longer one. The greatest disgrace concerning these men is that a large body of Americans has voted repeatedly over decades to keep them in high office. Perhaps, most ridiculous of all, American liberals seem to forget that Mr. Thurmond started as a Southern Democrat.

In the 1930s, Eleanor Roosevelt prodded the great Franklin to speak against the horrible lynchings of black people in the South, but the President felt that politics would not permit this. Southern Democrats were a key part of his political coalition, and Southern Democrats were segregationists, and far worse in a number of cases. So Franklin kept quiet on lynching, and, in some southern states, lynchings continued to be occasions for family picnics. I can't resist pointing out the historic family values connection here.

The evolution of the contemporary „southern strategy" in American presidential elections is based on little more than the fact that the same people who used to be Southern Democrats (the Republican party having become anathema in the south for more than a century after Mr. Lincoln's „evil" Civil War) switched to being Republicans after the Civil Rights movement and

Mr. Johnson's „evil" voting rights legislation of the 1960s. Such is the slow path of progress.

Poor Trent forgot himself and will now likely pay the price. Neanderthal Republican hacks like columnist Jeff Jacoby already have the kettle to the boil for rendering Lott's hide, a fact which should alert us that some deeper political reason lies behind these rare Republican chest thumping displays over principles of decency. Again, I will wave goodbye with not a twinge of regret, although sure in the knowledge that no better person waits to take his place. I can't help feeling scorn over American liberals' satisfaction at Lott's pathetic statement<sup>3/4</sup>pathetic, that is, when weighed in a balance against a lifetime's work in the cause of backwardness and stupidity.

Of course, thanks in part to Mr. Gore, we now have a President for whom competence is not even an issue. He is the first Disney-World-diorama President, capable only of looking as though his plastic coated, mechanical jaw actually makes the sounds coming from his computer chips. He has earned a place in history, though, having demonstrated that the presidency itself is now a Constitutional institution of questionable relevance. The druid-priests to imperial plutocracy who scurry around the White House keeping his servomotors running and downloading new sound bites onto his chips<sup>3/4</sup>the creatures actually now running America<sup>3/4</sup>could do just as well or badly if the Bush display were packed up and stored away in the Smithsonian's basement. Perhaps most pathetic is American liberals' constant looking to the Democratic Party as savior. Many progressive sites on the Internet display counters with the number of days remaining in Bush's term. „Excuse me!" as many Americans annoyingly say when making a rude point, but are we talking about the same Democratic Party that has not said a word about mistreatment of prisoners, torture, and murder since 9/11?

Mr. Clinton's foreign policy, while lacking the Appalachian-throwback character of Mr. Bush's, was often belligerent, often badly conceived, and largely reflected the same set of interests. Dare I also mention Mr. Johnson launching into what was to become the holocaust of Vietnam? Or the charming Mr. Kennedy trying repeatedly to assassinate Mr. Castro, beginning the flow of troops to Vietnam, creating the corps of professional thugs called the Green Berets, and nearly engulfing the world in nuclear war? Or Mr. Truman's dangerous fiasco in Korea? The same jingoistic, imperialist impulse remains dominant.

But I suppose there is relief in longing for a friendlier face like Mr. Clinton's. That way you can feel a whole lot better about what is going on. And it still will go on, no matter whether Bush remains or not.

From the world's point of view, there is actually some painful merit in Bush's holding office. I believe already, without the President's crowd fully realizing what they've done, forces have been set in motion for historic realignments in international affairs. Bush's Texas-barbecue-and-lethal-injection crowd is driving all civilized nations on the planet to reconsider aspects of their relationship with the United States, something that likely will have profound consequences over the next few decades.

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*Published in the 2003 January/February issue of the American Rationalist ©.*

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(Publikacja: 06-06-2003 Ostatnia zmiana: 21-09-2003)

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