

She Ain't What She Used to Be

Written by Ed Baswell
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America Has Moved from Center-Right to Center-Left



We are not a “center-right” nation any more. The results of the election last Tuesday proved that.

Americans spoke and they said “left-of-center” is O.K. In fact, by re-electing Barack Obama, they said creeping socialism is O.K. With him as president, we will almost surely see more debt, more taxes, more ineffective programs, less military spending, the full-blown effects of Obamacare and more “free stuff.” I could be wrong, but I doubt it.

The days when America was “center-right” in her politics actually began to dwindle down during the latter Bush years. We may come back from the left to center-right, but it is going to take a while and it is going to come after a period in the “socialist” desert where times will probably be extremely tough.

While it is true the election was not a wholesale repudiation of center-right politics—Romney won almost half of the popular vote—it sends a message: America ain't what she used to be. In spite of his dismal record, the exit polls tell us Americans were generally happy with the job the president did in his first term. High unemployment, debt and deficits, Benghazi and “flexibility” with the Russians did not faze more than half of the electorate. Obama won the popular vote, and more importantly, the Electoral College.

The American Left has experienced more than its share of lopsided defeats—George McGovern in 1972 comes to mind—but liberals always seem to be able to pick themselves up,

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dust themselves off and get back in the race. Now, we'll see whether the America Right can do the same. Will conservatives live to fight another day? The ability to bounce back is essential in a democracy because the great questions of the day are never really "settled." Each generation has the right to ask those questions again.

Over the years, the Left has shown an ability to quickly consolidate power after winning elections. When Liberals claim new territory from the private sector, they believe it is theirs forever and, for the most part, that is true. Once the Left grabs it, there is no taking it back. That only happens when their policies end up being unmitigated disasters and the citizenry says, "Enough!" Sometimes, even then, Liberals are able to keep what they have captured.

Such is the case with Barack Obama. It is highly unlikely that health care will ever completely return to the private sector. Medicine has been socialized, perhaps forever, and there will be no turning back unless America slides toward the center again, and even then it may not happen. So-called "death panels" will probably be a part of the discussion indefinitely. Eventually, the government may very well decide whether you live or die, depending on how much your care is going to cost the bankrupt "nanny" state. It will be all about dollars and cents and, at the time, it will make perfect sense when the government accountants explain it.

No, we are not "center-right" any more and you can partly blame George Bush. He deserted capitalism and conservatism when he initiated the bailouts. He topped off the tank for Obama and Obama is pressing hard on the accelerator. One can only wonder what this Chicago "community organizer" has planned for his second term. I am not optimistic.

Thanks to Obama and his party, power is more centralized than ever. Much of the control has been raised to the federal level. Every couple of years, we get to vote on who can use it, but there is no discussion about returning it.

Time and time again Tuesday night, the big blue cities cancelled out a sea of red suburbs and counties.

We are at a point in our history when the failure of politicians to keep their promises doesn't matter. What they say matters more than what they actually do. Obama said he would cut the deficit in half. Instead, he added at least a trillion dollars to the deficit every year. Didn't matter.

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He's still in control. That's because, to many Americans, promises are plans. A politician "saying" he or she will do something is tantamount to "doing" something.

The "takers" won Tuesday night. The "makers" lost. In the long run, the American people will lose. A debt bomb is about to blow up and our leaders rumble along—fat, dumb and happy—as if there is no problem. The chickens will come home to roost, in the immortal words of Jeremiah Wright, and America will pay a heavy price.

The world view of the Obama supporters is dangerously incorrect, but Mitt Romney was not able to convince a now "left-of-center" nation to change course before it comes in contact with some painful realities. The discussion will continue, because in a democracy, the dialogue never ceases, but it is going to take a huge amount of persuasion to convince America to move back to the center-right.

Will four more years of Obama be horrible enough to convince Americans to walk back toward the middle? Maybe. People do change their minds, sometimes in very profound ways. Then, when they are told they can't go back, they may get very angry.

They will see the influence of Republican governors, now at the highest level in ten years, confronting the federal government. Hopefully, many of the most popular red state governors will roll up their sleeves and engage in political warfare with the feds. More often than not, they will lose, but it may very well change the way their constituencies view Washington. That may set the stage for a 2016 presidential candidate who can make a bold, passionate statement for free-market conservatism and individual liberty. That candidate may win and America may once again be described as "center-right."

The challenges for any conservative will be enormous in 2016. The changes Obama has made, now ratified by his re-election, are virtually institutionalized. The tactic of describing any movement toward fiscal sanity as a heartless "cut" to vital services and vulnerable dependents will continue to be the Left's calling card.

Government employees—"victims"—will weep and wail when the axe of spending cuts and de-regulation begins to fall. The "folks" will be blamed for not wanting to pay their bills. "Progressivism" always figures the takers will be more eager to defend what they are given than

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the makers will be eager to defend what is taken from them.

A moderate-to-conservative consensus will involve more than a national discussion. Layers and layers of bureaucratic garbage will have to be removed first. Center-right America is, so far, buried in a deep grave and it is going to take lots of moderate-to-conservative shovels to dig her out.

Ed Baswell is the host of "Crossfire Radio," Monday through Friday, 7-9 am, on The Promise, 90.7 FM. The show is streamed live at promisetalkradio.org.