

The Times They Are a-Changin'

Who was the last brash, rich, loud-mouthed Republican New Yorker to become President of the United States? The answer is Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt, who became the youngest President of the United States when President McKinley was assassinated. No one expected the iconic New York Republican to take on any rich bigshots. In fact, Roosevelt became an opponent of the most powerful men in the country at the time, Jay Pierpont Morgan. We have antitrust laws today that brought down the biggest monopolists and business control networks thanks to Teddy Roosevelt. There is a good reason why the hero of San Juan Hill is etched at Mount Rushmore along with Washington, Jefferson and Lincoln. He has gone down in history as one of the greatest Presidents who ever served this country. Roosevelt, like Donald Trump, did not get along well with his own Republican party, and in the end he bolted the Taft faction and ran as a progressive Bull Moose. Roosevelt was shot by a would-be assassin during his run for President and he said that it takes more than a bullet to kill a Bull Moose.

Will Donald Trump surprises detractors and fulfill his supporters by taking on politics as usual from whatever corner it emanates? This election has been particularly acrimonious and it will be difficult to overcome some of the hard feelings. So what else is new in American politics? Barack Obama was not Mr. Popularity throughout his tenure as President of the United States.

Ultimately, the Presidential candidates may be separated by less than 100,000 in a country where almost 120 million people voted. The Electoral College, however, will certainly provide Donald Trump with 276, to Hillary Clinton's 218. Once again, we have a history lesson in the making. We live in a republic, not a democracy. When Al Gore won the popular vote in 2000, there were those who screamed "foul" and demanded that the Electoral College be abolished. That never happened, and if Hillary Clinton edges out Donald Trump in the popular vote, certainly we will hear the same proposal kicked around.

The Founders of this nation were concerned about voting for President and U.S. Senators by popular will alone. They perceived that Congress might be close, and that demagoguery might affect election outcomes. It was for that reason that electors from the several states chose the President and state legislators selected the Senators.

One easy defense for the Electoral College is that Trump's margin over Clinton, while close, is nevertheless convincing. The same may not be true for the electoral vote, which will be so close that were it not for the Electoral College, the election might be contested. The Electoral College, provides a sense of decisiveness, at least in this election. On other occasions, the Electoral College wound up tossing the race into the House of Representatives, which then chose the President of the United States.

The pundits will be writing for years about angry white voters who seized the day and won the war. Many will say this was an anti-establishment election, much like when Barack Obama defeated John McCain and Mitt Romney. Perhaps this election is nothing more than the pendulum on an old grandfather's clock, merely giving the opportunity for leadership to the anti-Obama guy?

It would be a mistake to see the Trump victory as a mere reaction to Clinton corruption and disappointment with Obama. The States have overwhelmingly elected Republicans, and Congress has firmly stayed in the hands of Republicans. Take Pennsylvania as an example. Democrat Josh Shapiro, who was elected Attorney General, but in both the Pennsylvania House and Senate the Republicans have strengthened their majority, making the Republican rule in the Commonwealth veto-proof. Governor Tom Wolf will have to work hard at making compromises uncomfortable for him.

The Republican formula has been successful where it has **not** energized its philosophical conservative base. Rather, Republican presidential candidates have won where they have been able to fuse together Democratic working values with Republican notions of more restricted, less intrusive government. Hard as it may be for many to swallow, the election of Ronald Reagan and Donald Trump represent more a triumph of core values concerning America's work ethic than any revolutionary zeal. A Trump presidency can be successful, if the new President is wise enough to incorporate some Democrats in his administration and avoid trampling those with whom he disagrees.

In a marvelous book, *Animal Farm*, by George Orwell, a parody of the Russian Revolution is played out on a farm. The cruel farmer is overthrown by the animals, and the pigs wind up leading the new establishment on the farm. The animals were more harsh at oppressing their own kind than the evil farmer. The first government after the Russian Revolution was a democracy, quickly overthrown by the Reds who established the communist state. The Orwellian message is that revolution is one thing, but governing is another.

We will be living with the Trump revolution for some time, but can the President-elect transform himself into a respected leader who is willing to listen to others and draw upon the expertise of those with whom he will surround himself? Must reading for the President-elect are any one of the recent marvelous books on George Washington or Teddy Roosevelt. Both titanic figures were legendary in their ability to listen to others, consider different points of view, and put their own considerable egos aside to do what was right for the country.

Can Donald Trump be a Washington or a Roosevelt? I am not putting any money on this bet, but like most Americans I look forward to questioning the way we have done things in the past and thinking about whether we can avoid government snarl to reach a mutually agreeable destination without being wrecked along the way.

Bob Dylan, the newly minted Nobel Prize winner, was an angry young man when he wrote *The Times They Are a Changin'*. In spite of that, he ultimately wound up as the first person to win the Nobel Literary Award for writing music.

Your old road is rapidly agin'
Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand
For the times, they are a-changin'.

Time will tell just how much fun this ride will be.

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