

North Side Sun

Upcoming election will be life changing for Americans

by DAVID SANDERS

September 21, 2011

American political discourse, which acquired a new stridency over the course of the Bill Clinton impeachment episode and has maintained it ever since – heated further by the 2000 election debacle -- now stands poised to veer into street-brawl intensity as the 2012 election approaches. One reason for this is that much is at stake. Another is that the political right, which began to find its voice in the Reagan years, powered by intellectual engines such as the Cato Institute and the Heritage Foundation, is no longer as cowed as it once was by the formidable academic/media/entertainment monolith that has controlled the discourse for generations. The 80-year hegemony of the political left – the pace of achievement of its agenda episodically slowed, but the trajectory of its path never deflected – is under serious threat. On the very threshold of achieving the progressives' century-long dream of transforming America into a European-style social democracy, essentially killing off our quasi-capitalist economic system, they stand in horror as Americans metaphorically armed with torches and pitchforks have materialized to tear the whole edifice down. In other words, what is at stake is ... everything.

How America got from where it was politically in the 1920s to where it is today (and where it will soon be if it falls over the precipice near which it now stands) can be imagined as the life of a volcano: flaring and sputtering enigmatically most of the time, but producing, in this case, three principal eruptions. These political volcanic events have been presided over by, in historical order, Franklin Roosevelt, Lyndon Johnson, and Barack Obama.

The New Deal did much to cut the United States loose from its constitutional moorings. The Supreme Court, under threat from Roosevelt's "packing" scheme, adopted an interpretation of the "commerce clause" that it is rather doubtful the founders had anticipated. Over the years since, the commerce clause has been reduced to little more than a talisman: a magical phrase – rather like "abracadabra," the use of which would at least be more honest and would avoid dragging the Founding Fathers into the charade -- that the executive or the Congress piously utters whenever either wants to do something that the Constitution forbids their doing. At least one federal appellate court has drawn the line at forcing Americans to buy a specific product – health insurance – merely by virtue of their being alive. So the issue will perhaps be decided by the Supreme Court, which means that it will be decided by Anthony Kennedy.

Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, pushed along through Congress by strong tailwinds from the JFK assassination, added greatly to the infrastructure of governmental agencies and regulatory and enforcement mechanisms necessary to achieve the progressive dream. If we take the charitable view that the Great Society did not purposefully set out to

destroy the black family, we can only observe that that has been one of its principal and more baleful unintended consequences. We can also assume that Democratic politicians cannot have failed to notice that the cycle of trans-generational poverty and dependence on government that these programs have produced has cemented in place the Democrats' most reliable block of votes. Can't have entrepreneurship breaking out in the ghetto: Entrepreneurs grow up to be like Herman Cain and see the light.

Barack Obama charmed - in the original sense of the word: to put under a spell - the nation in 2008. Coming almost literally out of nowhere, he presented to white America a sunny, unthreatening visage and a superficially positive, if vague, message of "hope and change" that would have been derided mercilessly if offered by a white candidate. What Obama seemed to offer was racial absolution, a reconciliation without an accounting. Against a very weak Republican opponent, his message was irresistible to much of America. Those who raised questions about his thin curriculum vitae were shouted down. He had been, after all, president of Harvard Law Review, even if he never wrote so much as a case note. Those who warned of his hard-left associations were called racists or worse. So he came into office assuming he had a mandate to finish the progressive agenda. After all, he knew what he was even if many of the people who voted for him did not.

The stunning Democratic losses of 2010 were understood by Obama not as a rebuke but as a complication to be dealt with. The executive, even without complete control of Congress, has enormous power to operate at the administrative level. (This is "constitutional" only because of prior trampling of the Constitution in the creation and empowering of these agencies in the first place.) Unable to get his cap-and-trade bill through Congress, Obama sought an assist from Lisa Jackson at EPA and accomplished essentially the same thing - the eventual destruction of the coal industry - by regulation, bypassing the legislative process. (Stung by the weak job numbers that were recently reported, Obama quietly rescinded the regulation in a Friday afternoon news dump.) When he could not get his Dream Act, which essentially granted amnesty to illegal immigrants who are not violent criminals, through legislation, he achieved his objective by having Immigration and Customs Enforcement issue a memo to agents that, in effect, tells them to treat illegals as if the act had passed. He don't need no stinkin' Congress.

This administration has adopted a tactic from Al Qaeda, which, when it kills American soldiers, booby-traps the bodies with bombs, so that other soldiers coming to retrieve the bodies will be greatly hindered in carrying out their task. Using a wrecking crew recruited mainly from the halls of academe, Obama has filled these agencies and cabinet posts with such hyper-leftists as Cass Sunstein, Samantha Power (Sunstein's wife, as it happens), Donald Berwick (the health czar) and the like, avoiding any Senate scrutiny by using recess appointments when necessary or appointing someone to a lower position in an agency so that he or she will not be subject to Senate confirmation, even though it is "understood" that the lower-level appointee will really call the shots at that agency. You can be sure that legions of people you have never heard of are working full-time promulgating regulations and rules below the radar (Actually, with today's lap-dog press, there is no radar.) in these agencies and departments. Even if the cavalry arrives in

January of 2013, it will be hard to root out much of the mischief that will have been given the status of law without actually having been enacted by Congress. They are booby-trapping the bodies as fast as they can.

So with the realization of the progressive dream almost in their grasp, but with the peasants clamoring at the gate, all tactics will be employed, and it will be ugly. Already, the Congressional Black Caucus has been dispatched to brand the Tea Party as racists. This charge has lost much of its punch through overuse, as even tax cuts have been called racist. But it has been such a winner for the left for so long that they can't seem to stop themselves. Look for lots of union thuggery, especially in swing states. For political junkies, it will be riveting to watch. But for ordinary Americans, it potentially will be life-changing. Let's hope they are paying more attention this time. I think they will be.