

LOOKING FOR LEADERSHIP *(Originally published September 1968)*

Try as we might, throughout this eventful year of unprecedented political happenings and surprises, we have been unable to work up enough enthusiasm to want to comment about it. This may reflect a general sense of discouragement and unease common to most of us who make up the vast and silent group of productive citizens who are not involved directly in politics and who hold no strong political convictions. It should be obvious that the growing rhetoric and press-agentry that ushered in the New Frontier and the Great Society during the past eight years of Kennedy and Johnson administrations has not only failed to “move the country forward” but actually speeded its decline on all fronts. American prestige abroad, that Mr. Kennedy campaigned so vigorously about in 1960, is at its lowest point of the century. The New Frontier policy of increasing our involvement in the affairs of the undeveloped nations and the extension of our “spheres of influence” into southeast Asia have backfired into the miserable war in Vietnam. Unbelievable national debt, loss of currency value, increased taxes, inflation, civil disobedience, rioting, looting, burning, increased crime, drug addiction, degeneration of morals, increased venereal disease, illegitimacy, air pollution, water pollution, urban decay – an unending list of problems, all infinitely worse now after eight years of liberal social reform. There is widespread dissatisfaction and dissension, and it is evident within both major political parties.

What most of us want is leadership that can be looked up to and respected; leadership that can at least give an indication that it is willing to face issues honestly, call a spade by its right name, react with firmness, and start the country on a course that will take us out of the increasing chaos that envelops us. Unfortunately, the only one of the many presidential candidates willing to discuss the issues forcefully is our unacceptable neighbor, George Wallace, whose demagogic and megalomaniacal tendencies should be enough to frighten off most intelligent voters. But make no mistake, while other candidates pussyfoot over and around the issues, afraid to alienate this group or offend that group, small George is making political hay. He has much the same appeal and eloquence as Huey Long, but without the humor and the breezy, attractive confidence-man roguishness that characterized the late Louisiana senator.

It is extremely improbable that Wallace can get enough votes to win the Presidency as a third-party candidate. This means that the leadership we seek will have to come from either the Democratic or Republican party. The Republicans have already settled on Nixon who, in spite of his lack of personal magnetism, campaigned most effectively and successfully united his party behind him. There is little hope that the Democrats can nominate anyone who might be likely to effect any change in policy; he will be

committed to the same philosophy of government existent for the past eight years. With their convention still ahead, the Democrats can only offer left-of-center Hubert Humphrey as their most moderate candidate. Stuck with their factions of warring liberals and ultra-liberals, and a disastrous eight-year performance record, the Democrats find themselves in the poorest position of many years. Our only hope, then, for new leadership and change in philosophy must lie with Nixon and the Republicans.

It will be a bitter irony if the candidacy of George Wallace serves only to prolong the Democratic disaster for another four years.

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