

CLOUDED FUTURE (First published February 1981)

The interval between the November election and the day of inauguration has been an uneasy one filled with speculation, doubt, some optimism and some pessimism. The Republican conservatives, hoping to effect a decided change in the philosophy of government, have lost some of their initial euphoria and have begun wondering how much can actually be accomplished. The Democratic liberals, disappointed in defeat and unhappy that they are no longer in full control, have been doing their best to create discord among the conservatives, while clinging to a hope that the new administration will make such a mess of governing that the pendulum swing will renew them four years hence. It has been predicted that the political "honeymoon" this time will be a short one and that by the end of February, the liberals, with knives sharpened and their strawmen already set up, will have proclaimed the Reagan administration a failure on many counts.

There has been no shortage of advice offered to Reagan and his appointees during this interval, most of it coming from the disaffected media, the entrenched bureaucracy of Democratically instituted government programs and the many forbidding acronymic organizations whose very existence depends on keeping the problems of welfare, civil rights, health, environment, education and race alive and in turmoil. Anticipating that the axe fall of cut-off funds is bound to land somewhere, each organization strives mightily to establish its special importance while warning of the dire consequences should it become a victim. Wherever the axe falls we can be sure that a chorus of outraged criticism will follow.

Such criticism will have to be taken with more than a grain of salt. Most of these organizations have come to consider themselves sacrosanct and, unfortunately, most as they have grown bloated and become more bureaucratized, have become more and more self-serving. To many of these agencies, it has become more important to continue solving problems than to admit that most of the injustices have been corrected and that most of the problems no longer exist, which should result in the dismantling of their programs and the dismissal of thousands on their payrolls. All can be expected to object strenuously if any move is made against them. It has been observed that "their principal interest being their *own* interest, they will oppose the elimination of unsuccessful programs in general, to prevent the discovery that nothing very bad would happen if they are abolished."

If there is one truth that became evident in the tenor of the last November election, it is that the majority of American voters, which now includes the Republican and Democratic well-to-do elements of business and profession and also the every-day, white

and blue collar workers who constitute the producing and major taxpaying part of our society, have had a belly full of the wasteful, ever expanding social programs of the last twenty years; and this majority expects to see some drastic changes made. It is a majority, moreover, which feels it has done its penance for past injustices, that most of these injustices no longer exist, and that those who have made a career of capitalizing on the inequities of yesteryear have nothing constructive to offer in the future.

The Reagan administration will have to face many politically motivated roadblocks in the months ahead, and we hope it will remember its mandate from the voters. As to the clouded future, we remain, neither Democrat nor Republican, a bit pessimistic about the outcome; but we shall have to hope that, with more than four years to prepare, the new administration stays firm in its resolve, that it knows the difficulties ahead, and that it has already settled on plans to combat them. We hope also that President Reagan will not succumb to the barrage of "well-wishing" advice and fall into the errors of Jimmy Carter, who tried to appear as a conservative to the conservatives and as a liberal to the liberals while failing miserably at both.

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