

# LXXXI – Bush or Kerry?

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By Butler Shaffer

Another meaningless presidential election is scheduled for November. The media has done its best – for at least a year now – to whip up public enthusiasm for this quadrennial ritual that does little more than confirm in the minds of witless souls that they are running the state! Voters in a democracy play a role not unlike that of the "fool-king" in ancient monarchical systems who, for one day each year, was selected king for a day.

For this year's election, the political establishment – impresarios of this three-ring circus – has provided the electorate with yet another meaningless "choice": a Yale graduate, pro-war, pro-Patriot Act, pro-expansive state member of "Skull-and-Bones" George Bush, or a Yale graduate, pro-war, pro-Patriot Act, pro-expansive state member of "Skull-and-Bones" John Kerry.

It's like getting to choose between emphysema and lung cancer!

The distinctions between presidential candidates are about as thin as a slice of English roast beef. There has to be some way of differentiating the Republocrat from the Democan offerings. A popular definition of an insane person is one who keeps engaging in the same behavior under the same circumstances, expecting a different result. Those who continue to stagger into voting booths to confirm their faith in "the system" – a faith they exhibit to others by wearing an "I voted" sticker on their clothing – may exhibit such traits of insanity. They are not, however, thoroughly brain-dead. As a result, even Boobus electorus must be convinced that there is some meaningful purpose to his or her participation in this charade.

In recent elections, voters were led into voting booths, spellbound by such major political questions as whether Willie Horton should have been placed on parole, whether the "pledge of allegiance" is a good thing, or the sexual peccadilloes of an incumbent president. The idea that Boobus should have any relevant input in determining major political decisions – such as United States' interventions into the affairs of other nations, the political structuring and direction of economic activity, or whether the state should have decision-making power over the bodies of individuals – is never to be considered. Should Boobus become sufficiently agitated, however, the establishment will allow for the introduction of such subset issues as gay marriage, cloning, or legalized marijuana to divert attention from the deeper questions, underlying such issues, that relate to the question of power.

I can think of no election in my lifetime that so illustrates the utter meaninglessness of voting as this one. On what should be major questions for people to examine and answer – war versus peace, a burgeoning police state, or the role of government in people's daily lives

– the candidates are as Castor and Pollux, or as twins joined at the hip. One sifts through the detritus of their speeches – if, indeed, their babblings can be so dignified – to find any measurable distinction between these men that would excite the mind of a halfway intelligent person.

Even the Democrats are not enthused about Kerry. They want him to get elected for one reason: he is not George Bush! Nor do most Democrats' reasons for wanting Bush out of the White House have anything to do with the kinds of issues that used to mobilize many of the faithful: war and peace, freedom of expression, and police powers. The Democratic convention in Boston was carefully orchestrated to keep such matters from being raised – much less discussed. Protestors were to be kept in "free speech" cages out of public view, opponents of the war were quickly whisked from the convention floor, while the Boston police were relied upon to sanitize the convention from any appearance of debate or controversy.

The war against Iraq and the Patriot Act – the two major issues that best illustrate the state's current aggrandizement of absolute authority – are being avoided by both parties at all costs. The comparative Vietnam era war records of both Kerry and Bush, and stem-cell research, are emerging as the issues that are safe for the political establishment and its puppet performers. Lest these issues prove unable to sustain the attentions of voters, whose minds might wander back into forbidden territory, the media will keep Boobus's mind entertained with the Scott Peterson, Kobe Bryant, and Michael Jackson cases!

The Democrats, like the Republicans, have one pursuit in mind: getting and keeping power! Each wants the power to do the bidding of the political establishment – which has shown, by its presentment of these Xeroxed images, that it cares not which candidate prevails. George Bush is already in office, and has the advantages of incumbency. The Democrats, on the other hand, must respond with a candidate who (a) is satisfactory to their establishment bosses, and (b) is electable. This party would have gladly settled for Jerry Springer, Larry King, or Pee Wee Herman, if any of these three stood a better chance of defeating Bush.

The utter bankruptcy of the Democratic party is revealed in the bumper-sticker that reads: "anyone but Bush." How would you like to be married to or be employed by another whose stated purpose in selecting you was "anybody but Smith?" Former Nebraska Senator – and Democratic leading light – Bob Kerrey showed how little regard his party has for the defense of individual liberties when he recently declared that such concerns had to be placed on the back burner!

"Throw those rascals out and put us rascals in!" could well become the Democratic party slogan this year. It serves as well as "anyone but Bush."

These two men are competing for the same office out of no other vision than seeing themselves in the seat of political authority in America. Neither man has what I could identify as philosophic principles; no threshold point they would be unwilling to cross if their ambitions for power hung in the balance. Each would be prepared to endorse cannibalism, the hanging of witches, or the creation of a U.S. Department of Psychic Phenomena, if it served their political ambitions and didn't offend the political establishment – which amounts to the same thing.

With politics representing the dregs of society, it is difficult to speak of any further collapse of this system. Still, George Bush has diminished the presidency far more than any other man during my lifetime. He even makes Nixon and Clinton look honorable and statesmanlike by comparison! The weeklong political and media wake over the death of Ronald Reagan was probably driven less by the qualities of the man himself, than by the effort to breathe some respectability back into an office that has been so demeaned by Clinton and Bush.

If we are able to read between the lines of literal expressions – a skill with which our intuitive mind informs us of what is implicit, but unspoken – we can see this year's election as the established order's admission that philosophic principles and meaningful issues no longer have anything to do with the electoral process. This election amounts to nothing more than allowing the voters to decide which man will get to carry out the political agenda of the establishment!

So, what is an intelligent person to do in this year's election? I would hope that some, at least, will join me in celebrating my fortieth consecutive year of non-addiction to the destructive voting habit. But I suppose that years of government-school conditioning, reinforced by the soon-to-be-heard litany "the election is too close to call," will cause far too many to confirm their commitment to this collective insanity. That the only meaningful choice available to voters is to not participate, may dissuade some, but not those well-conditioned in the doctrine of "civic responsibility."

If I had a preference for the outcome of this election – as meaningless as that result will be – it would be for George Bush to be re-elected. Make no mistake about it: I have absolutely no respect for this moral leper, or for the slugs with whom he has surrounded himself in his administration. He is both a dishonest and dangerous man. He will tell and repeat any lie, distort facts, and engage in any conniving that will permit him to carry out whatever preconceived policies he wishes to foist upon the American people and the rest of the world. He is the personification of the proposition that "a lie is as good as the truth if you can get people to believe it."

But there is a growing awareness of this man's vicious and dishonest nature.

Even many conservatives have unwrapped themselves from their bloodied flags to question how this man can be representative of their traditional values of distrust of government, non-intervention in foreign affairs, and non-deficit spending. Contrary to the mindless image the Democratic party insisted on presenting at its recent convention, there are many liberals and conservatives who are deeply troubled by the warlike and Gestapo-like stances taken by Bush and his gang of unprincipled thugs.

It is precisely this growing distrust and disillusionment that leads me to prefer having this man kept in office. For the same reason that I hoped for Bill Clinton's re-election in 1996, keeping a scoundrel in office in the face of growing public hostility to him, provides some measure of hope for political gridlock. Bush is already trying to weasel himself out of the wholly unprovoked act of mass murder he has inflicted on Iraqis and American soldiers alike. John Kerry has indicated that, if he is elected, he will send more troops into what will then become a bottomless pit of increased taxation, increased terrorist responses, and a return to military conscription.

If Kerry is elected, the Democrats – most of whom never opposed the Iraq war in principle, but saw it only as an opportunity to unseat Bush – will breathe a sigh of relief, as Kerry does his Lyndon Johnson routine on the Iraqi people. They will then focus their attention on what really drives them: the increased power of the state over the lives of Americans. Universal health care, gun control legislation, tougher environmental laws, and other intrusions into our private lives will be taken up with enthusiasm. As the Democrats intensify the war against both the Iraqis and the American people, the liberties of individuals will, in the words of Bob Kerrey, be kept on the back burner.

The 1952 presidential election centered on the war in Korea. Dwight Eisenhower campaigned – and won – on the promise that, if elected, "I will go to Korea," a statement most Americans interpreted as an indication that he would end that war. If John Kerry were to declare: "if elected, I will bring the troops home from Iraq, and I will work to repeal the Patriot Act," I would have a different attitude about the outcome of this election. But if this were Kerry's thinking, the political establishment would not have tolerated him as a candidate.

Kerry does have a smoother style than Bush, and for this reason his presidency – one that accepts the Bush policy of gorging the appetites of Leviathan – will be all the more dangerous. George Bush – whose character and policies are coming into greater disrepute among people – may have painted himself into a corner from which it will be difficult for him to move. There may be some hope for "gridlock" with Bush remaining in the White House, an option far better than a "bipartisan" opportunity to keep the same dirty games going in a Kerry White House. George Bush and the state have stumbled badly, all to the embarrassment of the political establishment. I find no comfort in John Kerry helping the system back to its feet.

As I stated earlier, I shall stay home on election day, and I urge you to do the same. A remarkably low voter turnout may be a meaningful "protest" available to those of us who value peace and liberty. But on the assumption that one of these two unprincipled louts will win the election, I shall find some sliver of opportunity in keeping Bush in office. This election – like most – comes down to little more than a choice between emphysema and lung cancer. Because I prefer health to choosing between fatal diseases, I pursue other avenues for bettering the world in which I live. But if it comes down to emphysema or lung cancer, I will opt for the latter. As my doctor informs me, emphysema is incurable, while lung cancer can occasionally be overcome.

### The Best of Butler Shaffer

