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MY VIEW

BY BEN SOMMER  
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Look at my life — voting Libertarian

Winston Churchill once said “Any man who is under 30, and is not a liberal, has no heart; and any man who is over 30, and is not a conservative, has no brains.” I turned 30 in September, and this year’s election marked my political middle age: I’ve “had a heart” this long, it was now time to discover that I also have a brain.

What I am talking about here is not a conversion of party allegiance from Democratic to Republican, but from a mindset that views government as the solution to most problems to one that views it as the root cause of most problems. Though the Republican Party has — ever since Ronald Reagan successfully resurrected the political ghost of arch-conservative Barry Goldwater — made itself out as the defender of traditional limits on government power, they deserve this reputation only when compared to the avowed socialists in the Democratic Party. History teaches us that the first American liberals came from Lincoln’s Republican party of the 1850s, and that the Democratic Party, after nearly being destroyed by the civil war, simply leap-frogged past them in their embrace of big government and high taxes, and their hostility to free market capitalism.

So how did I and my newly discovered brains vote this presidential election? We voted Libertarian. As expected, Michael Badnarik barely registered in polls (15,712 in Massachusetts), but at least this time the Libertarians saw fit to run a credible candidate who knew how to wear a suit and deliver a concise stump speech — skills their past candidates totally lacked. I’ll refrain here from a defense of my decision to vote third-party, as most people with whom I talk try to bully me into doing. I’m not the only conservative to be disgusted with the Republican (let alone the Democratic) offerings this year. Some bit the bullet and voted for Bush anyway, still others like me voted Libertarian or just stayed home.

Consider the record turnout of young voters this year. Given Churchill’s dictum, it was natural to expect 20-somethings to support the liberal candidate.

They are inexperienced, psychologically under-developed and ignorant of the economic struggles they are to face later in life as mothers and fathers, husbands and wives. Demographically they are waiting longer and longer to leave their parents’ nest, retarding their ability to exist independent of some paternal authority. Consequently, they wind up transferring many of their hopes for protection and subsistence to the government. And waiting for them with open arms is that pack of perennially immature, tooth fairy-believing, free-lunch-offering Peter Pans — the Democrats.

Even if young people do anticipate the struggles of 30-something adulthood, they are likely to still be under the impression that economic hardship is mostly the result of too little government support, not too much taxation and regulation. Just wait until they turn 30 and start earning a decent income — like me, if they’ve got any brains at all they’ll have a quick conversion.

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BEN SOMMER is a musician and recording artist.

VIEW FROM QUINCY

“By any measure, Tuesday was a very bad day for Democrats. Along with Bush’s 3 million-vote margin in the popular vote, Republicans gained seats in both houses of Congress. They had a huge psychological and strategic win in South Dakota, knocking off the Senate Democratic leader, Tom Daschle.”

THE PATRIOT LEDGER (MASS.)

VIEW FROM MINNEAPOLIS

“We cannot shake the notion that the candidate who gets the most votes should be president. ... The supreme irony of the Electoral College is that the jalopy cannot be fixed. Reversing its precepts — exaggerated power for small states and winner-take-all voting — would require too many in Congress and state legislatures to vote against their own interests.”

STAR TRIBUNE

ANALYSIS

Bush’s Election Day mandate: Become a uniter, not a divider

WASHINGTON With President Bush winning more votes than any presidential candidate in history, Vice President Dick Cheney declared the nation had given him a mandate. Secretary of State Colin Powell told his staff “it is time now to get on with the full agenda,” beginning with dealing with the Iraqi insurgency.

Bush is obligated to his conservative base. About a fifth of all voters considered themselves born-again Christians, and they cast ballots for Bush by a 4-1 margin. Moral values — not the economy, not terrorism — was the most important issue for voters, and the president’s conservative agenda got a boost from the approval of constitutional amendments in 11 states to ban same-sex marriage.

Healthy concerns

Still, a majority of Americans were unhappy about the war in Iraq and the course of the economy. Nine of 10 voters were worried about the availability and cost of health care, a problem that worsened during Bush’s presidency. His first term draws to a close with the first net loss of jobs since the Depression.

With more than 1,100 Americans killed in Iraq,



DEFENSE SECRETARY Donald Rumsfeld and Secretary of State Colin Powell may each leave the Bush cabinet.

Bush faces the challenge of finding a way out of the war and fulfilling his pledge to turn Iraq into a democracy in the Arab world. He has not described how to do that or when he will bring home the 142,000 U.S. troops now in Iraq.

And nuclear headaches hang over Iran and North Korea. Osama bin Laden remains at large and charismatic to millions.

Broken promises

Bush also is committed to fulfilling a pledge from 2000 that he failed to keep, namely overhauling Social Security with individual investment accounts — a plan that could cost \$2 trillion over 10 years in transition money. In his second term, Bush

will be looking at his legacy and his mark in history — a spot already guaranteed by wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and his war against terrorism.

Cabinet shuffle

Bush is expected to change up his Cabinet. Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson has said he won’t serve in a second administration. Powell had been expected to leave but suggested recently he might want to stay. National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice could be in line for a promotion at State or Defense. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld is a divisive figure considered likely to leave, if not right away, then after a year or so.

TERENCE HUNT/AP

TODAY’S DEBATE

Why do you think John Kerry lost the election?

Bill Geary  
53  
Business analyst  
Scituate



Because the American people are incredibly misinformed about the real issues facing the country.



Chris Allen  
34  
Architect  
Melrose

I think he got too caught up in the weapons missing in Iraq. He should’ve stuck to the economy.

Walter Quarles  
38  
Hotel business  
East Boston



I think Kerry lost because he talked too much about the war in Iraq, when he should’ve stuck to the economy.



Lane Trent  
47  
Print consultant  
Abington

Because he and the Democrats didn’t seem to connect with middle America.

THE METRO CARTOON: IT’S ALL ABOUT YOU

TONY MURPHY



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