

Can Biden Produce another "New Deal?"
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Our country is designed to move slowly, a protection that our Founders envisioned to protect us from dictatorship or anarchy. Moving with deliberate care, however, is not the same as gridlock in which emergencies go untreated.

It took almost a century for the blight on our republic, slavery, to become so dire that it threatened to destroy us one country. A devastating civil war and the presidency of a remarkable leader, Abraham Lincoln, saved us and ended chattel slavery. Our country paid a terrible price for kicking this issue down the road for so long.

It took another 75 years to address a second great injustice: the status of women as de facto property of men. Bringing half the population into equal citizenship made us a far better country, and the influence of this action has challenged every unjust country in the world to emulate our recognition of women as citizens. This is still a work in progress for countries based on religion, which lag far behind the rest of the world.

Year 2020 has been devastated by a pandemic that not only sickened and killed many, but also devastated the economy. Our republic was in danger for four decades before the pandemic hit. Year 2020 made us face the plight of our Black citizens, despite emancipation, that kept many from enjoying the upward trajectory that the White population had enjoyed since the end of World War II. Poisonous traditions and practices made it difficult for Black populations to acquire housing (the basis for much White inheritance), to have good schools because of segregation, to have access to good medical care, to have good grocery stores and farmers markets to provide healthful diets, as and to have policing that protected them from crime rather than criminalizing them.

Fortunately, some doors were opened to those Black citizens who were able to receive educations, middle class jobs, and housing in communities that barred them in the past. Our country now has an educated, accomplished sector of Black men and women who are increasingly serving in all occupations open to White people.

But those less fortunate still lag in inner cities, have underendowed schools, and suffer increasingly from police abuse, even when police departments have Black officers. In 2020, this ignored problem flared into national attention. We now see that Black Lives Matter.

President Biden faces a range of problems that make "getting back to normal" not enough. He must address real justice for all (see my December 4 column), crumbling infrastructure, climate change by investing in a whole range of green energy sources, and the dramatic change in what constitutes work. The increase in Artificial Intelligence and robotics has eliminated much human labor, leaving many with no skills to earn a living. This problem cannot be kicked down the road.

One structural problem has just come into view: the approaching death of the Republican Party. Our two-party republic has been in meltdown for four decades now, a problem that reduces the ability of our legislature to serve as a check on a rogue president.

Well before Trump presided (for one term) over destroying all the norms and checks on his power, the Republican-majority Senate, surrendered its ability to check him. They failed to remove the impeached president and devoted their efforts to voter suppression, packing courts with conservatives, and declared their political opponents "enemies," not colleagues. They demonstrated that they were no longer Republican, but were a Trump party. They could only win elections by gerrymandering and cheating.

President Biden might have to abandon his desire to "work across the aisle" when it is obvious that there are very few Republicans there. The few there are will work with him. Meanwhile, a new conservative party is slowly forming. The Lincoln Project is a growing organization of former Republicans, now either Independent or joining the Democrats. They offer a hope that we will eventually have a decent conservative party once more.

The Senate will have new leadership, and patriotic members will work with Biden. They must get rid of the filibuster, an undemocratic road block to good governance.

Next week: The Great Leap Forward.

685 words

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