

Count on a Conservative Comeback – in America and Its Neighbor to the North

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The following is adapted from an address that Lord Black gave at Ottawa on March 24, closing the Canada Strong and Free Networking Conference.

As a country with a revolutionary tradition, the United States has always considered the right to own and carry firearms as implicit in the success of the American Revolution, and in the

right and ability of all Americans to protect their property. This was implicit in the Declaration of Independence, in particular in Thomas Jefferson's ungenerous references to the Native people.

This helped give to American conservatism the character of individualism, of the rugged citizen, practically completely independent of the state, and in some respects, suspicious of it; patriotic and participating in political life, but above all in a society of individuals. The unallocated powers clause of the Bill of Rights, attached to the constitution at its outset, holds that powers not accorded the federal government belong to the states or the people, to individual citizens themselves.

In Canada, conservatism has always been an alternative policy to liberalism, first liberalism of the Burkean school: wide freedom of choice and behavior; and more recently of the statist, more *dirigiste*, big-government model. In the United States, conservatism has advocated for an enlarged private sector, relatively low taxes, a relatively unregulated meritocracy and a foreign policy more based on national than on collegial interests.

The constitutional right to bear arms has been indicative and supportive of the muscular citizenship of a very free people. In Canada, the imperial monarchical state conferred liberties that conservatives and liberals benefit from and exercise in a narrower band of prerogatives, largely defined by rates of tax and the extent of behavioral regulation.

This brings us to the perturbed present, where a glance at both Canada and the United States, and Great Britain also, might incite the inference that the mainly English-speaking countries have lost the capacity for self-government. But with regime change, as both Canada and America have surely now earned the right to enact, we could slightly replicate the tale of the tortoise and the hare.

It is unwise to be too confident in explaining complex historical phenomena, but it appears that what Abraham Lincoln called “the bondsman’s 250 years of unrequited toil” created a reservoir of resentments in the African-American community that was as much released as appeased by the long-delayed confirmation of racial equality a century after the abolition of slavery.

It is certainly possible to identify with the anger of African-Americans, but it is also true that no society in the history of the world has made such efforts as the United States not only to emancipate a formerly servile and subjugated element of its population, but to give it absolute equality with the majority.

Finally, our prospects: I always treat the great office of president of the United States and whoever holds that office with respect, and regret having to be negative when the American president is in Canada. But however the contemptible national political media of the United States try to disguise the fact, the current administration is a disaster.

Inflation, workforce shrinkage, the deluge of 5,000 or more people illegally crossing the southern border every day, the green terror, the imminent arrival of Iran as a nuclear power to join North Korea, the abandonment of billions worth of modern military hardware to the Taliban, skyrocketing crime rates and collapsed education standards – this farrago of failures will not be defensible in the elections next year.

The ultimate demonstration of the debility of the American political structure is the seven-year, lawless assault on the former president, Donald Trump. I am well aware of his shortcomings, having known him for 25 years, and am not particularly puritanical about how politics are conducted.

Yet Mr. Trump was the victim of the completely false allegation of illegal collusion with a foreign power to

distort the result of the 2016 presidential election, was subjected to two unfounded impeachment trials, was deprived of re-election, after legally dubious changes to voting rules, including millions of unsolicited mail-in ballots, and was falsely accused of inciting an insurrection on January 6, 2021. He had warned that at least 10,000 National Guard troops would be needed for security at the Capitol, but that was not acted upon.

The two ultimate guardrails protecting the American presidential selection process are that the courts will not alter an apparent presidential election result, and ex-presidents are not indicted. If the notoriously politicized justice system is so deformed that a stale-dated response to a blackmail attempt is reconfigured as a crime charged against Mr. Trump, that will either assure his re-election or confirm that America is no longer, in its most important constitutional responsibility, a society of laws.

In a country where federal prosecutors abuse the plea bargain rules to extort and suborn perjured inculpatory evidence with impunity to the false witnesses, in order to achieve a 98 percent conviction rate in federal cases, 95 per cent without trial, that is not such a drastic deterioration as it might at first seem. I believe that either the Democrats will think better of the alleged pending prosecution, or Mr. Trump will be re-elected, or both.

Mr. Trump or Governor DeSantis will win, and as of now, Mr. Trump has the advantage. Most people finally see the proportions of the perversion of the intelligence agencies, the FBI, the Justice Department, and the prosecution service in the psychopathic frenzy to destroy Mr. Trump. Mr. DeSantis – unlike Vice President Pence, Ambassador Nikki Haley and others – flunked the litmus test in condemning this latest assault on Mr. Trump. In order to sell Trumpism without Mr. Trump, Mr. DeSantis had to oppose the indictment of Trump unconditionally. If he can't do damage control or produce a

rival issue to the persecution of Mr. Trump, he will have to wait until 2028.

As for Canada, Quebec has effectively begun the formal extirpation of the English language and the prime minister has taken it upon himself to make to the world on behalf of all of us the confession that our forbears attempted some form of genocide on Indigenous people. No government that has acquiesced in the first and proclaimed the second is fit to be re-elected.

Apart from those problems, we are suffering from a severe annual deficit in investment capital flows, our health care is inadequate, almost insolvent, and reduced to advocating the merits of suicide to reduce its deficit. Our education system is a colossal unemployment deferral scheme that at immense public expense graduates huge numbers in fields from which they could not possibly make a living. We are freeloading allies.

Canada's strength is natural resources and instead of making the most of them, we regard them with shame and neglect, and have declared war on our greatest industry, oil and gas. No one has won four consecutive full-term federal elections in Canada except John A. Macdonald and Wilfrid Laurier, and the amiable incumbent is not in their category.

I believe that the Conservative leader, Pierre Poilievre, will be elected, that he will effectively defend conservatism from the inevitable barrage of partisan and media obloquy as harsh and primitive by explaining it, accurately, as greater freedom for individual Canadians, with no diminution of benefit for the disadvantaged. In doing so, I think we will graduate back to having a functioning two-party system for the first time since before the First World War, apart from the Mulroney-Turner years.

The world is rubbing its eyes in astonishment at the woke

self-mutilation of America and the sophomoric morality play of government in Canada. I believe that in the one country, as in the other, we will not continue to disappoint a world that has come to expect, and desperately needs us, to do better.

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