

Trump's Presidency

Incomparable

by Conrad Black



Many readers have asked that I comment on the American political scene and President Trump, most noisily veteran Toronto Star plagiarist Bob Hepburn, who for 40 years has been intermittently snorting out of the undergrowth foaming biliously about some alleged turpitude of mine. This week I am the “Rudy Giuliani of Canada.” Giuliani was a very successful mayor of New York City, but readers of my American columns, (which Hepburn claims to be), would know that I have been very critical of his legal efforts to undo the recent U.S. presidential election. Hepburn also bucks for the DiManno Prize for unoriginality with the worm-eaten chestnut that President Trump gave my co-defendants and me a full legal pardon because of my slavish adoration of him in a book I wrote about him (“A President Like No Other”), and in recent written and televised comments about him. Trump has not read that book, he told me, and those who have can confirm that it is anything but a whitewash: every tawdry aspect of Trump’s

jagged career is recounted.

The White House legal office, after extensive research, concluded that none of the defendants in our case should ever have been charged. Of the 17 initial counts, all were abandoned, rejected by jurors or unanimously vacated by the U.S. Supreme Court. Two were retrieved when the vacated charges were remanded down with heavy criticism from the high court. One of those, the nonsense about the boxes, had been deemed inoffensive by the Toronto Crown Law office and the other was a payment received after having been voted by the independent directors and twice revealed in our public filings and which the trial judge in Chicago declared to be the subject of a clerical error by the company secretary, who was acquitted. It is for this bunk that my co-defendants and I spent a total of five years in U.S. prisons, (an interesting interlude in my case but a monstrous injustice, as has been determined, in a country where prosecutors win 98 per cent of their cases, 95 per cent without a trial). This was all a long time ago.

I've also been very critical of Trump for falsely claiming that with an untainted election he would have won a landslide, and for claiming that Vice President Pence should have ignored the Senate confirmation of the composition of the Electoral College and refused to declare Biden's election. But this was the most compromised election result in U.S. presidential history. We will never know who really won the elections of 1876 (Rutherford Hayes), 1960 (John F. Kennedy), and 2000 (George W. Bush), but their irregularities were not remotely as serious as they potentially were in November in Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Trump and his team should have been ready for it after Trump predicted that the Covid-related changes to several states' election regulations would facilitate electoral fraud. The legal problem was that the U.S. Constitution consigns the management of elections to the states and most of the laws reducing

verification standards and enabling ballot harvesting were apparently legal. The only successful challenge would have to be to the U.S. Supreme Court over the constitutional guarantee of fair elections. When that claim was finally launched by Texas supported by 18 other states and the Supremes declined to hear the case, they abdicated their highest responsibility and the judiciary temporarily ceased to be a co-equal branch of government with the legislative and executive. I don't presume to say how the high court should have decided the case, only that it was a dangerous dereliction of its duty to decline to hear it, as Justice Alito implied.

Despite the totalitarian, woke American media and social media's determination to stifle any public question of the legitimacy of the election, where Trump's party gained in the Congress and in the states, about 70 per cent of the 74 million people who voted for him two months ago think it was a rigged election.

His followers were understandably annoyed that neither the Congress nor the judiciary took their concerns seriously. Few complained audibly about President Trump's remarks to his 300,000 or so supporters in Washington on January 6 until hours later and the extent of the attack on the Capitol was clear. His most inflammatory exhortation was Trump told them to go to the Capitol and "peacefully and patriotically make sure that your voices are heard." It is now emerging that the leaders of the assault on the Capitol were professional hooligans who had pre-planned the assault, and not core Trump supporters, and that the Capitol police had begged the Democratic mayor of Washington for National Guard reinforcements.

The article of impeachment that was passed this week is one third press clippings and contains no plausible legal charge. Trump is accused of inciting an insurrection, which is a violent uprising against the government; this was what President Lincoln declared when 11 southern states seceded in

1861, starting a Civil War in which 750,000 Americans died. It is Trump's enemies and not Trump who are stifling freedom of expression by throwing people off the main platforms, including Trump himself. The same people conducted the Democratic presidential campaign while the nominee largely remained in his basement under cover of the Covid virus, and ignored the months of "peaceful protests" across the country all summer that killed scores of people, injured 700 police, and did \$2 billion of damage to mainly minority-owned businesses. And now, in the most fatuous exercise in American political history, the House Democrats have launched an impeachment of the president with no argument, no evidence, no witnesses, no due process of any kind, for a proposed trial to remove the president from office well after he will have departed that office at the expiry of his constitutionally fixed term and to do so for conduct that did not occur. This will be a total fiasco and Trump's enemies in their frenzy are endangering the claim of the United States to be a democracy governed by the rule of law.

Trump has had the most successful first term of any president in history except Lincoln, FDR, and Nixon: near elimination of illegal immigration which was one of the most cynical scandals in American history-Democrats harvested the votes of the migrants, (never mind that many were ineligible voters) and Republican employers exploited the cheap labour, and 15 to 20 million migrants poured into the country. Trump created a full employment economy with sharply reduced levels of poverty and crime. The last year before the onset of the pandemic was the only time in a serious jurisdiction when the lower 20 per cent of income earners were gaining income in percentage terms more quickly than the top 10 per cent, a start at last on the serious problem of income disparity. Of course, Trump gets absolutely no credit for this inconvenient fact. His renegotiated trade deals, withdrawal from the insanity of the Paris climate agreement, while improving environmental quality in the U.S., identification in a civilized way of the China

challenge, tax cuts, shaping up NATO contributions, reviving the concept of nuclear non-proliferation for Iran and North Korea, elimination of oil imports: these were all solid accomplishments. Even the Democrats commend him for the greatest progress in Middle East peace since Camp David 44 years ago. He deserves great credit for producing a vaccine more than a year ahead of what the scientists had said was possible.

Giving more weight to these facts than to Trump's stylistic infelicities flusters Hepburn and others. They can't distinguish history from rabid partisan snobbery.

First published in