

# The Prospects for a Conservative Majority

DONALD ATWELL ZOLL

## I

ON ELECTION NIGHT, 1972, there were many million sighs of relief, mine among them. That night made it official: McGovern's "shadow" constituency was an illusion. McGovern's defeat was even more shattering than that suffered by Goldwater in 1964. As a matter of fact, the obvious ideological differences aside, there are certain similarities between the McGovern and Goldwater rejection by the electorate. I once commented, as follows, on the Goldwater defeat:

Who or what had died? This was the paramount question confronting Republican introspection. Was the fault to be found in philosophic untenability or inadequacy of political execution? To oversimplify: had the Republican Party chosen something called "conservatism," and had this alternative political orientation been overwhelmingly rejected by the electorate, or had there been something singularly and decisively wanting either in the candidate himself or in the supportive techniques employed to gain him the decision? Should the party make a major change in ideological direction, or attempt to analyze and correct deficiencies in organizational practices and campaigning skills?<sup>1</sup>

With certain modifications, the circumstances rather well fit the predicament of the Democratic Party in 1972. It is provocative to point out, however, that the presumably alien and noncentrist tenets of the Goldwater *credo* became readily absorbed into the ostensibly more moderate

appeals of Nixon and, indeed, legions of voters who rejected the Arizona Senator in 1964 voted for Nixon in order to register their support of the ideas they had earlier found so disquieting when articulated by Goldwater. If that pattern repeats itself, the "radicalism" of McGovern may well yet profoundly influence the course of Democratic political orientations.

One argument that is now advanced to counter the likelihood of the repetition of this formula is that Nixon has forged a "new majority," a coalition of the Right and Center that will endure at least into the immediate future. It has even been suggested that this is a sort of "conservative majority." It is with this admittedly attractive prospect that I should like to deal and I should like to do so in terms of two main observations:

1. There is little evidence, on the basis of the 1972 election, that such a new majority *now* exists.

2. It is equally apparent that a new majority coalition is potentially present, but it will not be brought into being by Mr. Nixon (at least in terms of his present policies) and it will not be realized on the basis of much of the advice (one would guess largely unsolicited) being tendered him by some "conservatives."

The resounding victory scored by Mr. Nixon cannot be interpreted as an enthusiastic endorsement of the Republican Party as any sober-minded political analyst would agree. References were made to Nixon's triumph as a "personal" victory, a vote of confidence in him as a discreet political personage. I find this extremely difficult to

believe (even without Watergate). In the first place, Nixon did not, during the campaign—or at any other time to my knowledge—project a reasonably cohesive set of political doctrines or social values. One did not vote for Mr. Nixon on the basis of his philosophical perspective, which is invariably vague, eclectic and pragmatic, to say the least. Did one, then, vote for him on the basis of personality, to endorse Nixon, the man? This, too, seems an implausible reason. Regardless of whatever merits Mr. Nixon enjoys, personal magnetism, a flair for evoking emotional attachment, does not appear to be one of them.

Of course, it is possible to interpret Nixon's fulsome plurality as, in large part, an anti-McGovern vote. No doubt this was a factor, but it does not explain what might prematurely appear to be an emerging majority, some huge centrist testament for the Nixon program, at least at its outlines can be seen.

My own view of the import of the election is that it strongly attests to a growing mood of uncertainty, caution and even fear and these factors, as against some genuine enthusiasms for Nixon as man or symbol, accounted for the widespread support for the President, cutting across conventional political and economic lines. It is likely that neither Nixon nor McGovern had an acute perception of the latent issues disturbing the electorate (if the "campaign" is the primary piece of evidence), but McGovern's ill-conceived and crudely articulated "experimentalism" jabbed hard at the public's already frayed nerve ends, while Nixon's image was mildly analgesic.

But one cannot reasonably talk about a "new majority" when it consists primarily of those whose only common bonds are uncertainty and apprehension. For such a loose coalition to become a national majority (even in the least rigorous sense) requires some more explicit and more posi-

tive values in common, some ideological cohesion. The high art of political leadership is demanded to make this transition, to mold uncertainty and apprehension from negative emotions to the espousal of broad common affirmative social and political principles.

The post-election mood of the body politic, largely emotional, can only be called "conservative" in the sense of supporting a posture of caution, conservation of accustomed practices and, in general, a disinclination, for the moment, to drastically disrupt the conventional. It is not "conservative," if by that word one makes reference to a fairly concrete body of social and political ideas and premises. It is clearly possible, it seems to me, to offer conservatism to the electorate as a reasonably well-defined political alternative, since its present state of mind (with Watergate removed) would be far from inhospitable to such an orientation. The question, of course, may depend on how one chooses to describe conservatism as a sociopolitical doctrine.

These brief observations bring us, quite naturally, to a consideration of the second main proposition: a new majority coalition may be potentially present, but it will not likely be brought into existence by Mr. Nixon. To explain and, hopefully, to sustain this contention it will be necessary to inquire more deeply into the basic state of mind of the American people. From my perspective, three motifs are observable:

1. There is a growing frustration and anger regarding individual impotency which results from deep-seated apprehensions regarding the transgression into peoples' lives and destinies of remote and implacable (and even unidentifiable) powers. Contemporary man finds himself to be a victim, but he will be, finally, an unreconciled victim, his desperation ultimately triggering, like an abused animal, one last violent surge for freedom, identity and meaning.

2. The uncertainties of life generally (of which social dislocation is a primary factor) and the mood of fear which follows from a sense of futility in the face of circumstances the individual feels unable to alter by his will, talents and energies, provoke a dominant reaction: a fierce resolve to hold on to and protect what one has, a sense of possession not limited to material goods, but to include one's position in society, one's repute, one's vital, if diminishing, sources of gratification. This conserving impulse is not a defense of a social system, much less a protection of a communal ethic, but is a highly individualized preoccupation with essential identity and self-preservation of a reasonably far-ranging variety, both socioeconomic and, if you will, psychic.

3. Regardless of what would seem the benefits of present-day life (an enhanced "standard of living" and a putative increase in "opportunity"), the levels of individual satisfaction within the society have been drastically declining. Indeed, the prevalence of a host of social ills (violence, crime, drug abuse, vandalism, rampant public carnality) are ultimately traceable to the diminishment of rudimentary satisfactions and, hence, are ill-conceived and destructive attempts to restore an appreciable degree of gratification. The evolving configurations of society reveal both a stress level dangerously close to inducing massive aberrational behavior and a lack of satisfaction equally conducive to hazardous social insecurity.

Social insecurity, indeed, is a term usefully descriptive of all these factors. But even assuming a recognition of the nature of these social instabilities, a severe problem exists in translating them into the predicates of political theory, to say nothing of ameliorative public policy. Neither a political nor a policy response has yet been forthcoming—and consequently a

"new majority" is but a shadowy political entity, an embryonic construct.

I think it is feasible to conjecture about the rallying of a more or less explicit political sentiment arising from the pains of this social insecurity, but it cannot be solely a politics of protest, a nihilistic expression of anguish. A genuine political manifestation must be constructed upon a realistic expectation of coping decisively and dramatically with these social dangers. In this sense, it is vital to speak of a new *conservative* majority, but only if one interprets conservatism to be a philosophy of social conservation and renewal.

How can this new majority be forged? Allow me to make three preliminary observations:

1. it must be recognized that these insecurities felt by people are predominantly *social* in character;

2. these anxieties are *real* and cannot be assuaged by customary political and economic palliatives;

3. they cannot be resolved by either ideological advocacy or by the further stimulation of individualistic aggressiveness—their resolution calls for the revival of charity and social friendship.

The isolation and impotence of the individual has social origins. The social structure malfunctioning produces these results; the individual fails to derive from his inevitably social functioning the reinforcements he requires. It is no solution, therefore, to simply "reindividualize" the person, to reduce the social impact. Indeed, the political thrust (whatever form it may take) must be directed toward rehabilitating the social structure. It must be the goal of political thought and action to reestablish a society suitable for humane existence and one in which the debilitating insecurities are reduced to tolerable limits.

The underlying causes of social insecurity as subjectively comprehended by indi-

viduals are not phantasms of the mind. The semi-articulated complaints of men are very real. Men are, in a sense, victims. Surely they are less able to cope, they are vulnerable to aloof and hostile social forces, they are transgressed against and they are confronted with less and less satisfying conditions of life. To admit this is a necessary starting point for ameliorative political action. Such an admission requires some candid and even painful recognition of cultural failure in America and a willingness to deal with it. Ideological pressure has created the baneful situation of relegating to the ranks of "radicalism" all those who accept this premise, while forcing, as well, the opponents of ideological radicalism to uncritically accept the thesis that "all's well" with America. To admit the vital need for social rehabilitation in this nation, to question many of its currently prevailing values, does not, *ipso facto*, place one among the latter-day Jacobins. It is a myopic form of patriotism (and a distinctly unpromising one) that insists upon the conformity to social opinions, supported neither by evidence nor reason, solely on the basis of their culturally self-congratulatory aspect.

By the same token, the roots of our discontents are deep enough below the stratum of conventional political concepts and divisions to require modes of reform undeniably unconventional, even "radical," if you will, in the philosophical sense of that word. The recognition of the necessity for the attitudinally radical spirit inherent in the concepts of conservation and renewal is far from being alien to the conservative mind, although I readily concede that it may be foreign to much of contemporary American conservatism.

If it is true that the problems that beset us and, inversely, could unite us, lie beneath customary political remedy, we are compelled, thereby, to rethink the matter of the nature and scope of political and by

implication, governmental function. To the historically-sensitive conservative, these thoughts tend to turn about two major considerations: (a) that political or governmental action is neither to be feared nor despised, *per se*, but must be restricted by prudence and moral circumspection; (b) the limitations of politics lie in their inability, experientially demonstrated, to effectively resolve matters pertinent to social life that fall, broadly, into the categories of the ethical, spiritual and artistic. One is also tempted to add to this list the realm of the psyche in a more overt sense.

Where does this leave us? To begin with, these reflections reject the notion that government is the "natural enemy" of free men. Rightly constituted, the political instrumentality is indispensable and the power it generates is a critical requisite for the well-ordered society. In the same breath, politics (more properly those who practice it) must be aware of its essentially supportive role from which certain prudent limitations can be inferred. In truth, the primary function of politics is to insure the best possible conditions for the propagation of human happiness and well-being, although politics can neither guarantee such happiness and well-being nor can it produce such conditions by direct action.

Government, the institutionalized expression of the political art, has as its elemental crux the obligation to maintain, to insure, societal order and, indeed, to enforce a condition of rudimentary security that transcends order—that condition that seems to me best symbolized by the word "tranquility," as I have argued elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this, it is reasonable to assume that government ought to project and therefore to sustain the civic ethic, principally by the direct means of a leadership that personifies collective ideas of virtue.

The paradox of modern American government, on the broadest level, is that in

pursuing goals ultimately inappropriate to the political instrumentality, the genuine goals and practices of government have been neglected and weakened. Let there be no doubt about the fact that government cannot perform most of the tasks assigned to it by overly expansive democratic politicians in this century, but let there also be no doubt that government can and ought to do many things to directly enhance the welfare of its citizens and that its powers are, when all is said and done, limited only by discretion—which means limited by the intelligence and sagacity of those who direct government. Thus, while the roots of our social ills lay beyond the corrective machinations of legislators and bureaucrats, we cannot proceed to ameliorate them without the use of government, initially in its appropriate sphere, and without ongoing governmental participation in our social restoration. Put another way: power exercised without wisdom is culturally suicidal, but wisdom employed with power is socially futile.

We have been discussing, at base, how one goes about the problem of reestablishing a general sense of security within a society. And while the root causes of insecurity are predominantly psychopathological and, hence, unassailable directly by governmental action, no remedial, culturally self-generated corrective is possible without first establishing those forms of security, admittedly elementary, that are a matter of political and even governmental initiative. Currently, the aim of government in this explicit connection ought to be three-fold:

1. to reverse the growing trend that makes government itself a causative agency of insecurity;

2. to vigorously and uncompromisingly suppress those elements within the population that overtly pose a threat to the nominal security expectations of the citizen;

3. to use the power, influence and even the moral prestige of government to deter those forces and conditions that indirectly stimulate the cultural anxieties that debilitate the society.

To pursue the above listed policies would, in fact, represent a highly significant shift in the prime orientations of American government. However sympathetic the Nixon Administration might at times appear to be toward conservative viewpoints, it has not manifestly pressed forward in these directions. The rapacity of the bureaucracy remains unchecked, the provocations of criminal and revolutionary factions have not receded and nothing in the Nixon outlook implies any zeal for adopting a strong stance in regard to social regulation designed to enhance an individual sense of security and to foster a consistent tenor of tranquility.

The principal indicator of this widespread insecurity of which we have been speaking is a form of hypertension that expresses itself as mutual hostility. While it is no doubt true that our times feature an intricate pattern of social competition and mobility, it is also accurate to say that we approach the conditions of class warfare—so eagerly promulgated by hard-core revolutionaries. Lamentably, the atmosphere of hostility extends across the entire spectrum of American life. Unconsciously, the contemporary citizen views virtually everyone as a potential aggressor—he has been conditioned to this reaction by the prevalence of aggression. He has also become accustomed to manipulation—which is a form of aggression—practiced upon him by a host of crassly motivated social forces: governments, schools, corporations, labor unions, particularly the “communications industry” and even the churches. Most of the time, he reacts to the will of the manipulator, but he is not totally unaware of what is happening to him and occasionally this

knowledge engenders a flare-up of resentment. But beneath this infrequent remonstrance lies a deeper and continuing anger and hostility that saps the social unity and vitality.

This problem can be put another way: it is universally the case today that we mistrust the motives of nearly everyone. I dare say, we are not too proud of our own. The sad fact is that we are probably correct in our mistrusts; we have grounds to doubt the motivations of others, particularly those organizational forces whose power inspires fear in us. The tone of the national life is not only acquisitive, but also predatory. We are forced to practice, in the social milieu, a kind of counterpredatory behavior.

Social peace, if it is to be recovered, must be built upon a change in motivations—both group and individual—that will liberate us from the bondage of ubiquitous egocentrism that manifests itself, socially, in the sovereignty of selfishness. We must be prepared to acknowledge that there are higher ends, indeed, social ones, than the satisfactions of our desires, whether those desires be the wish-fulfillments of individuals or institutionalized avarice of organizations or self-conscious social groupings. Two of the oldest of virtues must be restored to prominence: humility and charity, rare qualities in an age of vanity and selfishness.

## II

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT to assess our problems as a culture, nor is it particularly complex to sketch in, by implication, a broad and general conservative response to these problems. The difficulty arises in translating this awareness and sensitivity, this grasp of general remedy, into explicit political action. Yet this is what we must do, for we must agree, as we have previously

said, that what we might call a social restoration must come, initially, from political leadership.

The first practical step in the sphere of political action is to create some viable bloc of the populace for a political leadership to lead—to build, in other words, a working majority. Put yet another way: how are we to develop from a disparate, but possibly right-leaning, electorate a majority coalesced about the socially healing principles of conservatism?

Such a political force can only be created in two steps: a frank recognition and articulation of the prime sources of our present difficulties, and a compassionate program of social action designed to ameliorate these cancerous maladies. Political leadership must return, once again, to its immemorial role of social healing.

On the level of political practicalities, I am convinced that such a working majority would insue from such a bold appeal for unity and sensitivity, but I am equally convinced that it cannot and will not be created by either the prevailing political leadership or by what parades as “conservatism” in many quarters and, particularly, by the image, the caricature, of conservatism held by millions of Americans.

There is a profound confusion in the popular mind regarding conservatism, a confusion in part fostered by old-fashioned liberals who, with their nineteenth century label appropriated by others, hastily adopted the term “conservatism” and in part induced by new-style liberals anxious to slander and discredit the conservative persuasion. The public’s confusion is easily seen in its conviction that conservatives appear to endorse the following:

- weak government;
- the sanctity of free market economics and its extension to all aspects of social life;
- a “survival of the fittest” approach to social welfare;

a defense of unrestricted entrepreneurial adventure;

a disinterest in progressive approaches in such areas as ecology, public health and consumer protection;

the enforcement of a puritanical code of ethics;

a jingoistic conception of the American role in world affairs.

The vast legions of the public are not overwhelmingly enthusiastic about such convictions. In general, in rejecting McGovernite radicalism, they may seem to be saying: we opposed surrender in Vietnam, we are concerned about inflation and governmental fiscal recklessness, we want more "law and order," we oppose governmental autocracy (e.g., school busing) and, in general, we are inclined to be cautious. As we have earlier observed, one cannot build a "working majority" on the basis of such loose affiliations. But beyond this, the thrust of their feelings—even in so-called middle America—runs counter to what they *think* conservatism represents:

they still reasonably look to government for large-scale assistance and support;

they endorse private property and free enterprise, but only on general grounds of utility;

they reject outright Social Darwinism;

they acknowledge that socially irresponsible entrepreneurial interests represent forces threatening to them in many instances;

they have a strong conviction as to the need for a bolder governmental approach in such areas as health, environmental and consumer protection and control of inflation;

they have no real wish to return to the social morals of the nineteenth century;

they also do not see the United States as the indispensable purveyor of revealed truth to all the nations.

Not so curiously, while the convictions of the would-be majority ("silent" or other-

wise) clearly reject what *they* take to be "conservatism," their ideas quite sharply parallel the reactions of a *genuine* conservative. What they know about conservatism has been gleaned, by and large, from the virtual monopoly enjoyed by liberals and radicals of the popular media. Frequently, too, their worst fears are realized in remarks made by those self-identified "conservatives" who are, in actuality, nineteenth century liberals.

The contemporary American yearns for four things:

1. peace—to include, preeminently, internal, domestic peace;

2. security—to hold on to what he's got and to be reasonably free in his immediate satisfactions from external transgressions;

3. to be liberated from frustration—to be allowed to attain what he can attain and to enjoy the fruits of his skill, industry and patience;

4. to be able to gain self-realization—to be treated as a person and not as a thing and to feel that *his* individuality and self-cultivation will merit effective justice.

Any program of political action aimed at cultural restoration, social amelioration, must proceed from these aspirations. Conservatism, as a broad philosophy, seems to me particularly suited to react to these demands and to be able to translate, at once, these requirements, plus its own philosophical convictions, into political action. Conservatism in the twentieth century, among the other political alternatives, is the sole vestige of historical humanism and it is humanism that is the needed balm for our feverish society. It is really only conservatism that is concerned with the human being as human being, as against human beings as instruments to some nonhuman end. The problem is to express that compassion, that ideal of social friendship, that regard for the social bonds themselves, that reverence for the continuity of community into

vibrant political terms, into a program of political action. So far, conservatism has not done so, despite its occasionally eloquent voices. So far, conservatism has been unable to throw off its image as a fat, self-contented midriff embellished with a gold watch chain. But it is a false image, of course, because genuine conservatism in this century has been lean, impoverished and haunted by tragedy. It has been a philosophy of the contemporaneously dispossessed with its habitat located only in antiquity; it is a philosophy most sympathetic to those who are about to be dispossessed: the contemporary middle American.

But, let there be no mistake, while the restorative political and social program of conservatism would have an intensely reassuring impact upon the harried electorate in its forthright attack on the roots of our anxieties, it cannot be pretended that *bona fide* conservative politics will not demand much from that electorate. It will ask for (for it cannot require) changes in human perspectives as radical as those reforms it might install. While it might use government in new and forceful ways, these measures are comparatively pallid when measured against the potentialities of social restoration in more immediate, personal, micro-social terms. It must demand a new zeal for individual excellence, a new regard for personal moral probity, in short, conservative politics would solicit the abandonment of egocentrism, selfishness and greed at all levels and its replacement by a rejuvenated sense of duty, service, egalitarian sacrifice and, above all, simple self-control.

There is, at once, a bond of empathy between conservatism and the largest elements of the present electorate, but there is also a chasm that must be bridged. Conservatism offers the possibility of the revival of social peace, security, fulfillment and self-realization, but not by flattering

or reinforcing the ingrained prejudices of any particular social class, even though the middle class may well form the nucleus of the new majority. In order to be benevolent—as government must now be—it is necessary for the beneficiaries to acknowledge benevolence. To enjoin charity is to be able to appreciate the need for charity. To endorse humility requires one to accept humbleness on a personal basis. Political redirection is impotent unless there is a change in the national psyche and that can only come about by relinquishing the idea that all problems can be solved by merely imposing the values of one social group upon another. We must remember that status is less important than excellence in whatever social task it is our lot to perform. Conservatism is the political creed of the candidly embattled, concerned, even disaffected, not the doctrine of the complacent and self-satisfied. Conservatism equated with political action may be the reassertion of immemorial conditions and prerogatives, but it is not the invocation of the *status quo*. The new majority must be prepared for a prudential radicalism, but I am certain that they are. One cannot treat leprosy with aspirin and bed rest.

How could conservatism in action, so to speak, be radical? Simply because it must advocate and effectuate fundamental change. How “fundamental”? I would conclude that the following three principles, theoretically underpinning conservative political action, would manifestly constitute fundamental changes in national attitudes: (1) the restoration of social sovereignty; (2) the recognition and pursuit of moral objectives; (3) the support of legitimate social competition and the suppression, conversely, of intra-societal predatory behavior.

Permit me to discuss these principles in more detail. Conservatism would endorse a kind of superannuation of individualism

as a basic social concept and replace it with the acknowledgment of the higher priority of the community. It would do so not because it sought to reduce or destroy human individuality; on the contrary, it would do so in order to enhance, qualitatively, the status of the individual under the assumption that man is innately a social animal. Only by according to the community the ultimate priority can we realize those vital satisfactions that sustain men. Rapacious individualism, as opposed to individualism based on enlightened self-interest, has torn and wounded the social fabric to the place where the legitimate hopes and demands of the individual are seriously jeopardized. The hostilities that mar our tranquility are, in part, the product of a confusion over priorities in which an unenlightened individual appetite reigned supreme and in which the social reciprocities of duty, caretaking and mercy were obscured and denigrated. The restoration of a sense of community is the first order of business for conservative political action.

While government or, indeed, the craft of politics is not explicitly a moral agency, it is also true that government and politics must proceed on the basis of recognizing the primacy of the ethical over all other aspects of social life and to have reasonably concrete conceptions of the moral character and ethical ends of the society. Conservative politics, then, represents a rejection of moral relativism that has produced two very regrettable effects: the relegation of questions of morals to subjective, individual choices which inherently denies the efficacy of civic ethics and the supposition that moral questions can be resolved by a simple appeal to transient utility.

Competition and predatory behavior are not the same things. Competition implies an uncertainty of outcome between parties at least roughly comparable or equal or between an individual and his personal chal-

lenge. In competition there are no victims. Social competition for a variety of reasons is wholesome and perhaps indispensable. Further, social competition encompasses a huge range of activities beyond the economic—even in the process by which humans, as well as other animals, mate. But predatory behavior is something else again. Here there are victims. Communal peace ought to be based upon the exclusion, to the extent that it is possible, of this force—the preying upon the literally defenseless by the strong and avaricious. Conservative politics in its protective role stresses the suppression of those social forces—individual and collective—whose activities can be rightly defined as predatory, whether the victims are consumers, employees, students, taxpayers, children, parents, patients or the physical environment itself. Clearly the victims cannot prevent the commission of the predatory act, but the community, through its governmental agency, can and must.

### III

THE NIXON electoral victory of 1972 bought time, even if it did not determine very much. The Democratic Party, in its postmortem after the McGovern debacle, attributed its defeat not only to the ineptitude of its standard-bearer, but also to its estrangement from the sizeable flood of right-leaning sentiment well-marshaled by George Wallace. There is a strong possibility that a revived Democratic Party, oriented toward a social democratic center, allied again with organized labor and Wallace's populist adherents, could offer a very serious and possibly successful challenge to Republican presidential hopes in 1976. The Republicans, after Nixon, are almost bound to preserve a rightist inclination, but of what variety?

If one grants the nominal core of the

party faithful, Democratic and Republican, it is possible that the right-leaning "middle" vote might well be split, the "bourgeois" elements of it going to the GOP, while the populist and moderate laborite elements swinging again to the Democrats. In one sense, what would be produced by such a configuration would be a moderate leadership, whoever won, very likely a quite pragmatic one. But what would such a circumstance resolve? Certainly no "new majority" could be claimed by either of the parties.

Such a majority is frankly hard to conceive without major party realignment, except for the possibility that the leftist elements among the Democrats could reassert their control and present another candidly left-wing candidate on the hustings. Faced with that situation, the GOP might well shift enough further to the right to forge another temporary alliance with nonleftists without truly declaring a conservative point of view. But the issue cannot solely turn on partisan advantage if the interests of the nation are to be served. We cannot go on indefinitely attempting to solve the problem of national leadership by choosing between the least undesirable alternatives, a situation that follows from our failure to stage presidential campaigns on the basis of pertinent and significant issues. Moreover, these quadrennial exercises in political pragmatism cannot continue indefinitely. Sooner or later (likely sooner), the electorate will rebel and may well express its dissatisfactions by supporting very exotic candidates or even unfamiliar and disquieting forms of political action. The Watergate aftermath will certainly encourage the latter.

The need is for more numerous conservative politicians, no doubt, and I think that they will appear eventually, given the prevailing social momentums. But presently the need is for a type of politician with suf-

ficient foresight to see the virtues of authentic conservatism somewhat ahead of its widespread popularity. Such a politician must operate on motivations other than his own sheer personal advantage, but he would, I think, be distinctly rewarded for his courage and perception. He must feel a singular obligation to attempt to save his country. Despite the undeniable handicap of advocating a political program that would not comport with the ideological stereotypes of either major party, such a politician could find himself as a tribune of a new majority that he would have in large part forged in terms of political cohesion.

Indeed, the GOP itself might, by a tremendous thrust of the imagination, become a truly conservative party if it could alter its traditional disdain for theory and its penchant for bourgeois stolidity. Certainly that party contains within its ranks some attractive, conservatively-influenced personalities.

All in all, America is not likely to see the emergence of a full-blown conservative party. But it must witness the appearance of a new, humanistic political activity that, while it will be uncompromising in its principles, will have as its mission the unification of the distraught and suspicious elements of the country. It would be supported by a conscientious majority of Americans. What we ought to have, so to speak, is a "Young America" movement modeled after the imaginative repostulation of Toryism by Disraeli. In that connection, Mr. Nixon has likened himself to Disraeli, but the melancholy fact is that, unknown to him, a comparison with Gladstone is far more apt.

<sup>1</sup>Zoll, D. A., *The Twentieth Century Mind* (Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1967), Chap. II, pp. 25-26.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, "American Government; A Byzantine Predicament," *Modern Age*, Winter, 1973.