

The Election Crisis Is Not A Constitutional Crisis

by Edward Spannaus

The chaos and confusion in the aftermath of the Presidential election, in Florida and elsewhere, is beginning to bring a lot of Americans to their senses, as they realize that they didn't want either of the two leading candidates, Al Gore or George W. Bush, to be President.

The hysteria and desperation evident in both the Gore and the Bush camps since Nov. 7, should not obscure the critical point: that this is *not* a Constitutional crisis, but only an election crisis. In truth, the entire election process for the past year has been a travesty, as both parties rammed through nominations (actually coronations) of incompetent and basically unelectable candidates, and then ran media-driven campaigns which avoided any discussion of the most crucial issues facing the nation and the world.

Now, there is time to sit back and relax, and to reflect upon what has happened. There is no rush to resolve matters quickly: The country has until Dec. 18, when the Electors who constitute the Electoral College meet in their respective states to vote for their preference for President, and then until Jan. 6, when the new Congress convenes, and receives the votes of the Electoral College.

That is how this Republic actually elects a President—not through the television-driven circus of the campaigns and the election-night frenzy.

The Framers of the Constitution, in their wisdom, provided a mechanism to deal with exactly the eventuality which the nation now faces, an impasse between leading candidates, or the popular selection of unqualified candidates for the Presidency.

There is no need to rush to judgment, to determine a “winner” of the Nov. 7 national election. The nation already *has* a President, and as a result of what has happened, President Clinton is, in fact, in a much stronger position to act as Presi-

dent and to deal with crises facing the nation, than he has been at any time over at least the past two years.

Democratic Party Self-Destructs

This Presidential election cycle was rotten from the beginning. For the Democratic Party, its process of self-destruction accelerated drastically during this campaign, to the point where many of the party's “core constituents” simply stayed home on Nov. 7, and others just held their noses and voted for a candidate which they inwardly despised. Ralph Nader's campaign became a certain type of rallying point for disaffected Democrats who were fed up with the Democratic Party's attempt to become a second Republican Party—something against which Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.) had complained as early as January 1995.

Along with the adoption of the Dick Morris “triangulation” strategy—orienting toward suburbanite, upper-20%, voters, and away from the Party's traditional constituencies—the Democratic National Committee and the Gore campaign ruthlessly excluded any competing voices from the Party. This was most evident in the outright theft of over 53,000 votes, and at least eight delegates, from Lyndon LaRouche in the Arkansas Democratic Primary in May, plus the thuggery directed against LaRouche supporters in Michigan, Virginia, and other states, to prevent the election of any LaRouche delegates in caucus states. This was followed up by the exclusion of any dissenting voices from the party's official platform hearings in the run-up to the August Convention.

Had the Democratic Party waged a vigorous, FDR-style campaign, there is no question but that it could have swept both the House and Senate. Gore's exclusion of President Clinton—the most popular political leader in the country—from any significant role in his campaign, probably cost the

Democrats control of Congress in the next term. Two items to note, which confirm this: 1) Hillary Clinton's sweeping victory in New York State, in a race where the issue was much more Bill Clinton than Hillary, and 2) the fact that Republican candidates across the country were terrified of making any reference to their biggest battle of the past two years, the impeachment of President Clinton. Two of the most prominent of the impeachment Managers—Rep. James Rogan of California, and Rep. Bill McCollum of Florida—both went down in defeat.

International Implications

Internationally, the election-night see-saw, and the allegations of voting fraud and irregularities in Florida, have drawn a great deal of well-deserved ridicule toward the United States—whose State Department never tires of lecturing other countries as to how they should run *their* elections. In the eyes of many international observers, the election fiasco in the United States will severely crimp the style of the “human rights and democracy” mafia around the State Department and related non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

- Russian President Vladimir Putin, whose nation has been subjected to humiliation by the IMF and international institutions demanding “democracy,” offered to send observers to Florida.

- “A Day as a Banana Republic” was the headline of the lead editorial in the major Italian daily *La Repubblica* on Nov. 9. The editorial went on to describe how the crisis between Bush and Gore could drag on.

- The Zimbabwe *Herald*, an outlet for the government, also had a laugh, stating, “Election Intrigue Not Monopoly of Third World,” in its U.S. election article.

- From Malaysia, which was insulted by Al Gore personally in November 1998, a top official in the Prime Minister's office declared that “America should realize that there are weaknesses” in every system, and the United States “should not act as the policeman of the world.”

- And at the State Department's press briefing on Nov. 9, spokesman Rick Boucher was asked by a reporter, obviously tongue in cheek, whether the U.S. would ask for observers from the Organization of American States (OAS) to be sent to Florida.

But the laughter around the world at the chaos and confusion in Florida, also reflects a sense of relief: that neither of the two clown-princes of the American Presidential race, can now emerge as a clear-cut winner, with a mandate to carry out his destructive and dangerous policies.

Between Now and January

The American people came close to making one of the most disastrous mistakes in their history, by putting either Al Gore or George W. Bush into the White House, at a point when the global financial system is rushing headlong into collapse.



They need each other

But now, with the impasse over the outcome of the vote in Florida and possibly other states, there is time to remedy this situation.

What is crucial, is that we stick to that which the Founding Fathers and the Framers of the Constitution provided: the mechanism of the Electoral College.

The Framers of the Federal Constitution intentionally designed a procedure which would insulate the selection of a President, from the *vox populi*, and which they hoped would ensure the selection of only those “preeminent for ability and virtue.”

Alexander Hamilton, writing in No. 68 of *The Federalist*, argued that the procedure of indirect (or “intermediate”) election through the Electoral College, would ensure the selection of the most qualified candidate for the position, while minimizing the possibilities of intrigue and corruption, particularly that deriving from foreign influence.

This method, of intermediate election, provides “as little opportunity as possible to tumult and disorder,” Hamilton said. And since the Electors meet in each state, they are less exposed to “heats and ferments” than if they were all con-

vened at one time and in one place.

“Nothing was to be more desired than that every practicable obstacle should be opposed to cabal, intrigue, and corruption,” Hamilton wrote. “These most deadly adversaries of republican government might naturally have been expected to make their approaches from more than one quarter, but chiefly from the desire in foreign powers to gain an improper ascendant in our councils. How could they better gratify this than by raising a creature of their own to the chief magistracy of the Union? But the [constitutional] convention have guarded against all danger of this sort with the most provident and judicious attention.”

It was hoped that, by spreading the selection of the President out, through bodies of men selected in each of the various states for this singular purpose, that this would minimize the possibilities of corruption. Hamilton believed that the procedure thus designed, “affords a moral certainty that the office of President will seldom fall to the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree endowed with the requisite qualifications.”

This is the procedure set out in the Constitution. It provided a period of calm and deliberation between the popular vote, and the convening of the Electors, and then another period of time before the votes of the Electors were actually considered by the Senate, and, if necessary, that the selection of the President be taken up by the House.

There is no rush. The Constitution does not say that the results of the Presidential election must be determined within a day or two, or even a week or two. We do not face Constitutional crisis; rather, we face a mere election crisis, for which the Constitution itself provides the remedy.

And meanwhile, there are real crises out there, manifested in the financial collapse, the crumbling economy, the danger of war in the Middle East, and so forth. Those are the issues with which the American people should be concerning themselves, and ensuring that we have a President competent to provide leadership in these perilous times.

‘NOW COMES THE AFTERMATH’

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D.C. Nurses Settle, But Slave Labor in Health Care Expands

by Linda Everett

On Nov. 8, some 1,200 nurses at the Washington Hospital Center (WHC) in the District of Columbia, the region’s largest hospital, approved a settlement that brought an end to a brutal seven-week strike “over unsafe patient care conditions.” The nurses, who see themselves as the last bulwark against the dangerous hospital policy of mandatory overtime, under which they are forced to work up to 16 hours a day to cover for the hospital’s chronic understaffing, are joining thousands of other nurses nationally who are battling to stop the downward spiral of the quality of patient care by hospitals managed according to free-market ethics. The problem is so widespread, that U.S. Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.) is proposing a Federal bill to limit mandatory overtime of for nurses beyond eight hours a day or 80 hours in a two-week period.

Although WHC management in this case agreed—for now—to limit forced overtime and to allow nurses to participate on hospital patient care committees, it is guaranteed that an explosion of such strikes throughout the health care field is imminent. “Managed health care” has a murderous stranglehold over U.S. hospitals and health care policy, and is a critical roadblock to the ability to provide decent patient care.

Consider what happened at the Washington Hospital Center, owned by Med-Star, which is notorious for buying up hospitals only to shut them down. The hospital spends far less on labor costs than the national norm—about 50% of expenses, compared with a nationwide figure of 65-75%. While the hospital already was shortstaffed by 200 full-time nurses, it contracted with Kaiser Permanente health maintenance organization (HMO) to take thousands more patients. Despite the influx of hundreds more patients, the WHC didn’t expand its nursing staff. Instead, it routinely subjected the nurses to “speed-up,” forcing one nurse to do the work of two to four nurses, caring for as many as 13 critically ill patients at a time, when only four patients is appropriate. The hospital forced nurses to work mandatory overtime, including two or three consecutive 8- to 12-hour shifts several times a week, and switched nurses from unit to unit helter-skelter, forcing them to take assignments on units in which they lack expertise.