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Cleveland Faces the Future, 1967.

CLEVELAND FACES THE FUTURE

Some Post-Election Thoughts

Sunday, November 12, 1967

The Temple

Rabbi Daniel Jeremy Silver

Tomorrow Cleveland inaugurates a new mayor. Carl Stokes happens to be black and our election happened to have been of national significance. For the first time a man of his race has been elected to the highest office of a great American city. The Stokes campaign had all the elements of high American drama since it pitted a son of the slums and the grandson of slaves against a son of privilege and the grandson of a president. For those of us who take a romantic view of the American dream the election had a happy denouement. It offered another proof that this land is a land of wide opportunity; that a man can come from the bottom rungs of the economic ladder to the top of his community. His election came at an opportune time because the headlines had been black. These past months the nation has seemed to have made little, if any, progress in breaking down the high color wall which has separated the races. Carl Stokes' victory was one small bit of evidence that this wall is not insurmountable - there are toe-holds and at least the most agile can climb over.

In a small way Mr. Stokes' victory is a sign of progress. But it must be underscored that the vast majority of negroes are still outside the wall.

All events are ambiguous and all history is paradoxical. On one level Carl Stokes' election marked a breakthrough and a restatement of the proposition that this is a land of broad opportunity; on another level it signaled the breakdown of community living - a shattering of the American dream which images the city as a broad mix of neighbors and neighborhoods living together under one governmental umbrella. Two elections ago, 35% of Cleveland's electorate was negro; in this election 38%, by 1970 the percentage will rise to 40%. These figures testify to white flight and abandonment. The white exodus from the center city continues. The high barriers of real estate and rental restriction remain in force. True, a trickle of negroes do manage to break out of the iron belt which bands the east side ghetto; but most can not and do not. Demographers insist that if present patterns of racial discrimination continue by the year 2,000 almost every one of our great cities will become what they call a "Negropolis," a large, black concentration surrounded by clusters of largely white suburbs. Social distance between the races has widened. The hope that we would come closer and closer together is vanishing. Today there is the central city carefully gerrymandered to exclude the more expensive whiter suburbs; and there are the many suburbs where people connive through zoning and housing restrictions to keep out "undesirables," and finally, there are the new counter cities being built here and there around the country for carefully selected people, where the "riffraff" and the rabble" are not welcome. In one sense, Carl Stokes' election must be understood as no more than a declaration of independence by the increasing black community of the center city that if they are unwelcome as neighbors at least they will govern themselves.

One of the tragedies in Carl Stokes' election, perhaps the only one, is that he comes to office at a time when the war against poverty and the attack on racial prejudice is running out of steam. Ten years ago Americans were speaking of cooperative effort, of joining forces, of shared enterprise, of community responsibility. Ten days ago the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Mr. Gardner described our society as abrasive. Increasingly each group wants only what it needs for itself and seems not to care how to adjust its wants to the common weal. Extremists of all shades demand what they want, now, all or nothing. Each of us has noticed the fraying of the social fabric. We have seen men and women who looked upon the Civil Rights crusade as difficult but urgent ten years ago absent themselves and begin to talk more of stability and social order than of the necessity of protest. They have come up hard against the obduracy of hate, the obstinancy of human nature and the inevitable concomitant of violence to social change. Ten years ago, except for extremist fringes, this country seemed united in a determination to achieve a homogeneous society. Today, I sense that fewer and fewer are ultimately concerned with this sacred purpose. More and more are living unto themselves, living their own lives, asking not what they can do for the nation, but asking only that the nation protect them from change and violence.

A few years ago the war on poverty was launched with great eclat. Gunner Myrdahl estimates that to be successful this war will require several trillions of dollars. Against this background the government proposes a budget of a few billion and Congress refuses to vote even that.

A recent survey estimates that it costs about \$9,000 a year to sustain a family of four with any dignity in one of our thronging cities. The gap between the Other America, the 30,000,000 poor and our America of abundance widens every week of every month of every year. The poor are poorer. There is inflation. There is the rising cost of living. There is less employment for the unskilled and for the semi-skilled, and programs of re-training lack the necessary sweep and scope.

Carl Stokes comes to office at a time when the American dream is often stated in word but belied in deed. We hope and dream, but vote against taxes, complain about bureaucracy and limit our personal involvement. I am afraid that all too many of us have assumed that somehow Carl Stokes' election will solve the problems of the urban crisis and racial antipathy which so trouble us. We want him to press a magic button and make danger and need disappear. We have invested far too much in the single fact of a change of mayors. He will, somehow, turn on the money tap in Washington. Funds will flow for urban renewal, for job re-training, for our school system, for every worthwhile project. By his very presence in office he will, somehow, moderate the black militants, keep violence from our streets, and by the moderation of his acts quiet the fears of the white militants and prevent racial tensions from becoming more exacerbated. We expect our new mayor to solve all the vast problems of urban living and, being human, of course, he can not perform miracles.

We have seen square blocks of our city convulsed in violence. We have seen square miles of our city demolished for urban renewal and not

renewed. We have seen the slums set in motion, the displaced pouring over into other areas which quickly become blighted; thousands of dropouts, children who lack shoes and winter clothing to wear to school, garbage piling up on street curbs, lines of unemployed. Our beaches are polluted, our air is polluted, our water is polluted, our streets are congested, crime rates are on the rise; Cleveland suffers all of the classic failures of urban life. And far too many of us, I am afraid, assume that by changing mayors we have solved these problems. We have not. We have only elected a new mayor. It might be wise, therefore, this morning, to make up a tally sheet of what can legitimately be expected of the mayor, what he can accomplish if he is vigorous, enterprising and decisive and what he can not be expected to do; what we must do for him; we, the citizens, we, the government.

What can be expected of Mayor Stokes? He can be expected to bring new administrative energies to the city. He can be expected to appoint men of skill and vigor. We had what was essentially a single administration for almost thirty years, and many officials have grown old and comfortable in office and have kept to archaic ways and old habits. Through his control of top-level appointments we can expect the mayor to improve the exacerbated relationship between the police force and the neighborhoods, and create a new climate of understanding between the servants and those whom they serve.

We can expect the new mayor to update and upgrade the level of city operations. Cleveland is an old-fashioned enterprise. I had occasion,

this week, to read through the twenty-nine reports of last year's Little Hoover Commission. Each of them details a city operation which is behind the times. Of the police department, the Little Hoover Commission said simply, that it "is a generation behind standard procedures in police management." In urban renewal the city has failed to complete the legal work on its first urban renewal project, Garden Valley, begun in 1956. On and on and on. The mayor will need money. Good men rightly command a good salary. The mayor will need to support his nominees. There must be dignity and scope to their office. But this problem is within the competence of the mayor. And it is within his competence to improve relationships with all groups within the city. In the last 30 years we have been governed essentially by the interests of business balanced by those of the cosmopolitan groups. The negro group has been tolerated but it has had to come hat in hand. No longer will the ministers of the negro community be kept cooling their heels in the mayor's office. We can expect, and do expect, the new mayor to listen carefully to all in the community, black and white, and we can expect him to alert us to the harsh realities of the urban crises. We need clear explanations and clear priorities - the requirements of urban change rather than public relations about "the best location in the nation."

Today, 140 million out of 200 million Americans live in cities. By the year 2,000, 280 million of 340 million Americans, almost 9 out of 10, will live in our cities; and our cities are not ready for them. We lack institutions, schools, roads, employment, recreational facilities, clean air, clean water, the amenities even for the smaller numbers who live

here today. We have not resolved or begun to resolve the deep-seated historic problems of poverty, racial antipathy, deteriorating housing, cultural and educational deprivation.

Our new mayor must make clear the depths of the problems we face and the cost involved in their solutions. We have tried to run our city on the cheap. Between 1940 and 1965, Americans actually decreased the percentage of tax monies allocated to their cities. You can not run a city on the cheap. It is going to cost you three, four, five, perhaps ten times more to run Cleveland and the mayor must make clear why, how much, and for what.

But, what can the mayor do about the nearly two in ten who live in slum areas and who are unemployed? What can he do about the three in ten who drop out of poverty area high schools before they have the skills which would make them employable? What can he do about the plants which are outside the city lines and spew their dust into the air and their filth into our rivers? What can he do when regional planners draw highways through neighborhoods and destroy what stability there is in order to make it easier for suburbanites to come into their offices and to leave for their grass-enclosed homes? What can he do about a city which must give to the state more tax monies for welfare and education than it receives back for these same services?

There are definite limits to the mayor's power. He can be effective within administrative limits but he can not begin to solve the problems of the city, unless he has the active and energetic help of Columbus and Washington and the citizenry. Is our state committed to the welfare of the

city of Cleveland? Has Washington escalated the war on poverty with speed and determination? President Johnson said, two days ago, that it was bunk to argue that we could not make progress both in Vietnam and in the war against poverty. No so! This year the Federal Government allocated to the cities less than \$1.00 per citizen to solve the transportation crises and less than 50¢ per person for the model cities' bill. The level of Federal aid to welfare has actually decreased. At first The Office of Economic Opportunity was appropriated 2.4 billion. That was cut in its present budget of 1.6 million and the Office of Economic Opportunity may come out of this Congress with only 1.2 billion. The effect of these cuts can be seen in our own city.

I sit on the Board of the Cleveland Office of Economic Opportunity. Last year we cancelled 16 programs touching almost 40,000 lives because these programs cost 2.7 million dollars which were no longer available. These were not luxury programs. They included literacy training for adults, job training for high school dropouts, advice on maternity and health care for teen-aged mothers, and a program of high school courses for adults who never completed their degree. We did not cut these programs because they were unworthy or had proved themselves misdirected, but because funds were not available.

Washington talks about a war upon poverty but, in effect, supports a probing action; demonstration projects, a beginning, and nothing more. We are not keeping up with the growing population, much less solving our problem. If you want to know the real limitations of this war on poverty consider Operation Head Start, which is the most approved and widely-respected of all its programs. Head Start is designed to provide preschool

training for four and five-year olds from deprived homes where they have not been read to or spoken to or been taught hygiene or to dress properly. Competent psychological investigation has shown that one in two children from poverty areas have little, if any, chance of success in school, unless they receive such preschool training. There are today, 7800 youngsters between the ages of 4 and 5 in the poverty areas of Cleveland who ought to be receiving the Head Start opportunity. Only twelve-hundred (1200), one in five, are and the reasons are purely fiscal. What is true of Operation Head Start is true in heightened degree of less-fully accepted programs. Because of Vietnam the Federal government has not accelerated its demands upon the Congress and because of the war-related budget deficit Congress has cut even further the Administration's limited requests. Thirty-plus billion dollars a year in Vietnam spells a very limited war on the ills of our cities.

Carl Stokes can not be expected to solve those problems for which he needs the help of the Federal and the State government, the help of industry and labor, and the help of all who live in greater Cleveland. I submit that there is every indication that he will not receive the vigorous support he requires. Our nation is tragically burdened by war and, surprisingly, mesmerized by ideology. Our many problems require imaginative, even radical solutions; yet, many judge all proposals not by the standard of need but by some inherited political theory. Instead of experimenting we debate theory: Federalism vs. state's rights, capitalism vs. socialism, public works vs. industrial incentive. Increasingly this nation has become separated into competing ideological sects; the new left, the new right; the old left, the old right. Once we prided ourselves on our pragmatism. We said that our

greatness lay in our ability to face a problem and find practical solutions. It was never either/or; either government or industry, either Federal or state control, but both/and. Today any project which smacks of federal aid to the communities is anathema to some, any project which is to be partially managed by the free enterprise sector is anathema to others, and any project which is not under the total control of the poor is anathema to others.

Why must it be one or the other? Accommodation and compromise are of the essence of a democratic system. Tragically, but increasingly we are voting ideology - not need, and this is the way of divisiveness and failure.

We need to take a good look at our own involvement. Most suburbanites, most of you, believe that you can create a counter city, a city out there, where there will be security and safety, quietness and tranquility and all the amenities, where you will be spared the violence and the turbulence of the city. This attitude is characterized by a piece of ground which most of pass almost every day, the Shaker Lakes. The Shaker Lakes belong to the City of Cleveland. Cleveland spends \$6,900 a year to maintain them. But, woe betide the youngster of black skin who rides his bike up to the Shaker Lakes. A police cruiser will come by and tell him he is trespassing. Yet, you and I can come down to Rockefeller Park or to the Zoo or to the Aquarium and be welcome. We can go anywhere but "they" can't come here. Of course such isolation is impossible. The city intrudes regardless. Our children where the clothes of the sidewalk, speak the idiom of the city street, take its drugs, and are endangered by its violence. The slum roll across suburban

lines. Crime has wheels. Wish it or not we can not escape the city. It is to our advantage and right to join forces.

The Bible describes the city as a mother. The city creates the environment which creates the man. The city give us our dignity or drags us into the gutter. The quality of city life is ultimately the standard of the life of its citizens. And who will say that the quality of life in Cleveland is what we would wish it to be? If we truly want to support a new start for the city then we must begin, each in his own way, to take an entirely new attitude towards the responsibilities of citizenship. Taxes are not citizenship, though a willingness to vote major taxes for major services may be. It is not citizenship to go to a Parent-Teacher's Association meeting in a white suburb about your child. It is citizenship to encourage the 34 school systems of this county to cooperate to overcome urban alienation and suburban trivialization. It is not citizenship to complain about the mayor of Cleveland, but work only in suburban politics. It is citizenship to see that your representative in Washington and Columbus give him the money to meet our needs, vote to enlarge the war on poverty, and the ambit of Civil Rights.

It is citizenship to see that by your vote, by your act, by your energy, by your awareness, you help America come of age. For this is a new age which demands an entirely new formulation of governmental authority, of private initiative, and of citizenship responsibility. Some dimensions of this new age are already clear. We have learned that you can not band aid a city's problems and cure them. We have learned that to maintain the amenity of city life we can not scrap useful institutions simply to rebuild them on raw acreage nestled among expensive shacks that will be the slums of the next decade. We have learned that cities need clinics and parks; schools of

quality and medicine of quality; low-cost housing and strict housing inspection; alert and effective police careful of the rights and sensitivities of each and every citizen; adequate welfare and community service; monies and power to control industrial waste and traffic congestion.

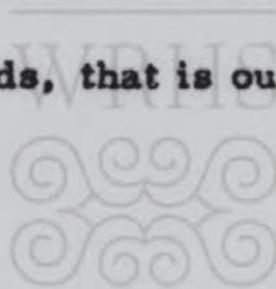
The cost is staggering. Certainly we will not be able to pay that cost if we continue draining our treasury for pointless wars. Certainly we will not be able to pay if by inaction we multiply the numbers of delinquents, of the unemployable, of the emotionally disturbed who must be rehabilitated at a prohibitive cost. We are a wealthy nation; we are the wealthiest nation the world has ever known. If any nation can meet the problems of the urban crises, then it should be this nation - but will it be?

A few days ago Martin Luther King commented much as I have this morning, that Carl Stokes will need the united support of the community.

Dr. King signaled the need for the cooperation of the business and industrial leadership. He said, using a phrase from our Bible, that the mayor will be like the sheep led unto the slaughter unless such support is forthcoming. Whatever he does will not be enough, and we will blame him for whatever be the failures. He will be our scapegoat. Whatever happens the next two years let us not blame the man, until we have blamed ourselves. Let us not see his shortcomings until we are sharply aware of our own, and can say that we have acted with the wisdom and will that is required of urban Americans in this century. By our vote, by our civic energy, by whatever influence and leverage we may have in Columbus or in Washington, we must find a way to give those mayors of our cities who represent the

emerging classes, the support which they need so they can do their job and we can have a stable and happy city. We must, for whatever our estate we can not escape the fate of our city. If Cleveland continues to deteriorate, if the quality of life becomes harsher, if violence becomes even more widespread, if the quality of communication between people becomes even more attenuated and exacerbated, each of us will suffer and each of us will pay the price.

Cleveland, in this fall of 1967, has an opportunity, nothing more. There are no miracles but there is clearly an opportunity for greater things. We have a much-needed infusion of new vigor in City Hall. We need new vigor at all other levels of our community lives and all other levels of government, and, dear friends, that is our task.



Q. How was the merger. It happened to be merged with the election
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the presence of a president - it ended in the best American
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States - a winter ruled his own triumph - he ended his short
election night victory speech - with a heart full "Good
bless America"

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