



The Truth About November by Russ Fusco

FLYMF October 2004, The Election Issue, Volume 1 Issue 8

The Electoral College has taken a lot of crap lately, and why should it? In all of their wisdom, the Founding Fathers must have predicted the stark beauty of a time when the executive leadership of 270 million Americans would come down to 200 swing voters in Ohio—down from 223 after last year’s Ohio-Ohio State game. It’s unfortunate that Ohio University and Ohio State University are not playing each other this year. A late October game would have made everything much simpler. Whichever team George Bush chose to support, John Kerry would surely select the other, causing the Ohio vote to be split down the middle. The Nevada vote would go according to Vegas odds, meaning that the favored team would tip the electorate there. So, while voters in Florida were puzzling over chadless ballots, trying desperately to remember how the candidates spell their names, the election would all come down to one football game in the middle of the heartland. Move over Peoria and bring on the Buckeyes; what could be more American?

But, alas, the NCAA is not nearly as visionary as I am, and so we wait and we worry, and we call each other names. And we blame everything on the electoral system, put in place ages ago to protect democracy from those who would most like to destroy it, like Alexander Hamilton, Godzilla, and Joe Kennedy. Long since disestablished as an actual voting entity, the college is really just a shareholder’s stake for each state in the presidential election. Besides ostensibly preventing voting fraud, the college also has a great way of mandating a candidate whose popular win doesn’t look so great on a pie chart (before you liberals start crabbing about Bush, don’t forget that Clinton claimed a whopping 370 electorals with only 43% of the popular vote in 1992, only three less than the number of Big Macs he ate on the campaign trail).

With so much weight attached to an invisible entity, I like to imagine the College with substance, as an infernal jury box populated by Tojo, Knute Rockne, Marilyn Monroe, and Frankenstein’s Monster, all staring at a big World War II era paper map of the continental United States with Hawaii and Alaska, scaled to the same size, shoved in the corner like salt and pepper shakers. As electoral votes tick away and states magically shade to either blue or red, Tojo nods knowingly to Rockne, like the evil communists in “The Manchurian Candidate.”

Everyone complains that they can’t decide who to vote for because the candidates are exactly the same. The truth is that

it is we, the everyday citizens, who are identical deep down—we like fast food, fast cars, fast women, fast manicures, and fast service. We don’t have time for the details or anything that would impede the progress of instant satisfaction. We agree on everything. We love baby seals, laughing children, and Ewoks, but we hate high gas prices, homeless people, and taxes. We can’t enjoy our success without feeling guilty, but we won’t sacrifice our lifestyles for what we perceive as a fair hand to the less fortunate. So we siphon our redemption-craving into far flung esoterics that we don’t really care about, leaving us wiling away our election year doldrums deciding whether to side with the lunatics on the far left or the far right. The Choice is not Life: it is religious conservatism versus entitlement. That’s like a breakfast of either kimchee or rotten sardines.

And so our candidates play the fantastic part of extremomoderates, shaking hands with the lunatics, while winking at us over their shoulders, as if to say, “Can you believe I’m taking this guy seriously?” Alas, we can, but it’s our own fault. I’ll give one thing to those whackos: at least they can admit where they’re coming from. That’s better than the rest of us, who like to think that we’re sanely moderate and not blindingly hypocritical. If you want to impress me, don’t buy a Prius: walk to work.

The one thing we can all agree on is violence. We all want to find bad guys that threaten our way of life, whether they be Islamists, Commies, or Teletubbies, and make them dead. Our candidates really are out there to convince us that they can pick the right bad guys to kill. And don’t forget our resilience against the truth: if you’re not smart enough to sell us a war coated in a confectioner’s crusade, don’t bother running. Remember the bottom line: give me my MTV, but don’t make my squishy little heart go “boo hoo.”

And so America, there is the stark truth about November. Your confusion and frustration is not the fault of the Electoral College or the candidates who are running; it’s YOUR fault, because you can’t clear your conscience with your desires. Whether you vote Democrat or Republican, you will be voting for the middle plus some whacko additive on either side. In either case you will vote for violence, because as much as we love those cute little baby seals, we love our cuddly eight-cylinder engines more, and we trust the guy who can convince us that we’re killing the right people for the right reasons.