

U.S. presidential elec Five questions about the Nov.2, 2004

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And so George W. Bush won, indisputably this time, without the help of the federal Supreme Court. In the late hours of November 2nd, some talking heads¹ had begun chanting that it was “too close to call”² –as they are wont to do in such circumstances—, pinning their hopes on Ohio, *the* decisive state in this election, as they had done on Florida in 2000.

After some initial stalling, John F. Kerry was, on the whole, prompt to acknowledge defeat. Rightly so, for the facts speak for themselves :

- More than 58 million Americans voted for President Bush, an eight million increase over 2000 and three and a half million more than

voted for Kerry. It is also four million more than Ronald Reagan garnered³ in his famous 1984 “landslide” victory.

- Not since 1928 had a president continued GOP⁴ control of the White House into a second term along with a re-elected Republican House of Representatives and Senate.

- In December, the popular vote was confirmed by that of the Electoral College, where Bush won all but three states with a majority of seven per cent or more, and the others – Ohio by 2.5, Nevada by 3 and Florida by 5 – by a comfortable margin.

The news came as a shock to many on either side of the Atlantic. On

second thoughts, however, the highly dramatised run-up to the election had come to quite a predictable conclusion. As they say in English law, you don’t change your horse in mid-stream. And mid-stream was where the U.S. stood then.

The 50-50 America⁵ had chosen a victor, had settled for the continuation of the Bush experience, the preservation of long-established values. Americans had obviously turned their backs on risky experiments in social engineering, such as the trivialisation⁶ of same-sex marriage. The U.S. had found for the seemingly stronger, albeit blunter, of the two contenders. They had set their hearts on the firm born-again Christian rather than the wishy-washy Catholic.

Much has been said about the Election and a rehash of all this would not make sense, the more so as it is no longer a topical issue. I have therefore chosen to cover the subject through five thematic questions and let North American newsmen express their views on President Bush’s re-election.

- (1) **A talking head = a television presenter, interviewer, etc., shown in close-up talking directly to the camera (New Shorter Oxford Dictionary)**
- (2) **too close to call = the winner of the presidential race could not be named yet, for lack of decisive evidence**
- (3) **to garner = to collect ; to gather**
- (4) **GOP = Grand Old Party, the Republican party in American politics.**
- (5) **50-50 America= an expression meant to show that the U.S. was evenly divided into two camps**
- (6) **trivialisation = banalisation**

Question one

How did G.W. Bush manage to secure his reelection?

In an item published in the Washington Post 24 hours after Voting Day, Dan Froomkin, reviewing the comments hot-from-the-press, listed five possible factors that could account for President Bush's second win :

- The “moral majority”, i.e. those Americans who claimed moral values were the core issues, played a prominent part.
- Other journalists played up the dramatic social, cultural and geographic divide that had first appeared during the 2000/01 election cycle.
- Yet other newsmen attributed the victory to W's capacity to “stoke voters' fear about terror, vesting himself in the cloak of a commander-in-chief at war and defining his opponent as a weak and vacillating leader”.

- He stuck to his plan and “kept his message simple”.

- “He divided – and conquered.”

For its part, The Toronto Star, a Canadian daily, featured a six-part series on George Bush's America, from January 15th to 20th, 2005. This series abounds in seminal information as regards the causes for President Bush's re-election.

A propensity for white families to have plenty of babies, or “natalism”, is one, according to Tim Harper, the Star's correspondent in Washington (Jan 16th : “Young, affluent and in the family way”).

It is “a theory showing ... that young, affluent, conservative families with the highest birthrates are raising broods⁷ of tiny Republicans who will keep their parents' party in power.”

“The natalism trend was spotted by Steve Sailer, who studied American fertility rates after the election and found the most fertile white women live in Utah, which was the only state where Bush received 70 percent of the vote.”

“White women average 2.45 babies in Utah, Sailer found, compared with merely 1.11 babies in Washington, D.C., where Bush won 9 percent of the vote.”

“The New England states where Bush garnered less than 40% of the vote – Massachusetts, Vermont and Rhode Island – are three of the four states with the lowest white birthrates,” Sailer wrote in the December, 2004, issue of the American Conservative Magazine.

“In contrast, Sailer points out, Kerry won the 16 states at the bottom of the list, with the Democratic anchors⁸ of California (1.65) and New York (1.72) having quite infertile whites.”

(7) a brood = humoristiquement, une nichée, une flopée

(8) an anchor = a person or thing that provides support and a feeling of safety (Longman's)

“On November 2nd, George Bush won nine of the ten fastest-growing states in the U.S.A., the exception being tiny Delaware. He also won 97 of the country’s 100 fastest-growing counties.”

“President Bush carried the 19 states with the highest fertility rate and 25 of the top 26, highly unionised Michigan being the only exception to the rule.”

In the first instalment in that series (Jan. 15th : “U.S. conservatives gunning for the presidential payoff”), Tim Harper insisted on the weight of religious and family values, which had tipped the vote in favour of the incumbent :

“22 per cent of voters said they cast their ballot based on ‘values’.”

“President Bush’s political guru, Karl Rove, is credited with mobilising the four million evangelicals who did not vote in 2000.”

“20 to 24 million evangelicals voted for the incumbent president, George W. Bush, that is between 33 and 40 percent of the president’s total vote.”

“About 79 per cent of Americans who call themselves evangelicals voted for W., that is 8 percentage points more than in 2000.”

In a 14-page essay, “The Red Sea”, posted on the site of the Washington Post on January 16th 2005, David von Drehle, also insisted on the key role played by “family values” :

“There are 30 states, including the totality of the red ones, in which married couples form a majority of all households. W. won 22 of those 30, by an average of 21 percentage points. The eight that went for Kerry were only narrow victories, by five points on average. Utah, with the highest percentage of married folks, gave Bush his largest ratio of victory : 71 to 26.”

“In nine states, there are equal numbers of households headed by married and unmarried people. Bush and Kerry split them evenly, four for Bush, five for Kerry, by middling margins : an average 16 points where Bush won, 11 points where Kerry did.”

“Of the 11 states, plus Washington, D.C., where married couples form a minority of all households, , Kerry won seven, by a stunning 24 percentage points average. Bush won five, by the relatively skimpy margin of 9 points. The District, with the lowest percentage of married

folks, gave Kerry his biggest victory ratio : 90 to 9.”

The Washington Post’s T.R. Reid (“Same-sex marriage measures succeed”, Nov.3, 2004) highlighted the one consensual element in that campaign :

“Red state or blue, north or south, voters around the country found at least one thing they could agree on yesterday as proposals banning same-sex marriage were winning in all 11 states where the issue appeared on the ballot.”

The proposals did win. In Mississippi, Montana and Oregon the proposed amendments limited marriage to one man and one woman. In Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma and Utah, the amendments banned civil unions⁹ as well.

Obviously, the bulk of voters rallied around traditional values and the candidate that, in their submission¹⁰, best embodied them.

Question two

Did President Bush really capitalise on the American divide? ■

In the immediate aftermath of the election, many in the MSM¹¹ agreed that President

Bush’s electoral strategy had consisted mainly in driving a wedge between “Red State America” and “Blue State America”¹².

John F. Harris, writing in the Washington Post, claimed that the incumbent¹³ had used “a governing strategy based more often on trying to vanquish political adversaries than split the difference¹⁴ with them.”

The same Harris added an ominous¹⁵ prediction :

“This election likely will not resolve the country’s deep cultural and ideological divides ... but give them new energy.”

The Los Angeles Times’ Ronald Brownstein concurred¹⁶ :

- (9) civil union = le PACS
- (10) submission = opinion
- (11) MSM = mainstream media, an expression mostly used by conservative commentators
- (12) red state vs. blue state = a hackneyed expression, used and abused during the campaign, referring to the colours identifying the major two parties : red for the Republicans, blue for the Democrats. The ironic twist being that — on crossing the Atlantic—political hues have been inverted : blue, in Britain, is the colour of the Conservative (or Tory) Party, while red, in the Old European fashion, remains that of the so-called progressive camp (Socialists, Social Democrats or Labour Party in Britain)
- (13) incumbent = président sortant
- (14) to split the difference means here to find a compromise
- (15) ominous = threatening, inauspicious, menacing
- (16) concurred means agreed

“After four turbulent and tumultuous years, President Bush expanded his support but still divided the country along many of the same lines as in his narrow and disputed victory in 2000.”

And Brownstein went on :

“One of the most intriguing trends was the increased tendency of voters to divide along cultural rather than economic lines.”

David S. Broder and Richard Morin wrote in the Washington Post :

“The basic alignments of the electorate echoed those of 2000, according to exit polls¹⁷ taken yesterday. Men, whites, rural residents and the religious observant were backing Bush, while women, minorities, urban dwellers and the less religious were going for Kerry.”

In the Wall Street Journal, John Harwood and Jacob M. Schlesinger contended :

“Americans lined up to choose between G.W. Bush and John Kerry – and to flaunt¹⁸ their political divisions... Regular churchgoers were rock-solid behind the Republican incumbent. So were married voters with children and Americans who own guns. Those who care most about the threat of terrorism and issues related to moral values voted overwhelmingly to give the 43rd president a second term. But ... voters who say they never attend church services sided just as strongly with the Democratic senator from Massachusetts. So did gay voters, single voters, union members and those most concerned about health care, jobs and Iraq.”

On November 2, however, an editorial in the Wall Street Journal, titled “The Undivided Country”, struck a different note. Here is the gist¹⁹ of that piece :

“Of all the clichés routinely trotted out by foreigners about the United States, surely this election has put one to rest : namely, that there is “no difference” between our two political parties.”

“Now, however, we have a new lament, which is that the next President inherits a ‘nation divided’ – split, as the recent cover of Time magazine has it, ‘over its place in the world, over its basic values, over its future direction. No matter who wins, the Uncivil War is likely to continue.’ ”

“Excuse us for asking, but has it ever not been thus? ... Elections shouldn’t be nice since they are fundamentally about apportioning²⁰ power. In North Korea, elections are very nice.”

“Notwithstanding Time’s description of a ‘venomous campaign’, this one strikes us as comparatively tame [for] the two campaigns have mostly stuck to the issues.”

“But while there’s something to the “Two Americas” analysis, it’s easily overstated. The Michael Moores of America may all be Kerry supporters, but most Kerry supporters are not Michael Moores.”

“For all the talk of a 50-50 country, our differences tend to be narrow rather than deep. It was instructive to see how Mr Kerry couched his differences with the President over

Iraq in tactical rather than ideological terms... By the same token²¹, it has been interesting to watch President Bush handle the topic of gay marriage, firm in his opposition but careful not to seem crass²² or intolerant.”

“None of this is to say that the differences dividing the parties are trivial²³. They are significant and fiercely held. But it is America’s fortune that the parties are forced, if not by conviction then by necessity, to tilt the country their way first by reaching centerward, where the bulk of the electorate sits. As a result, whatever our private feelings about tonight’s result, we’ll be able to live with whoever is elected.”

The writer of this piece was, in a way, prescient: there have been no “rivers of blood” flowing in America’s streets as a result of President Bush’s reelection, no “Uncivil War” raging between the Blues and the Reds, only a certain number of beneficiaries, namely those psychologists that had to supply counselling to the flood of Kerry supporters that stormed their practices because they suffered from P.E.S.T. (post-election selection depression)!

Question three

Outfoxed or outmoored? ■

One of the major issues in the election may have been bias in the coverage of the campaign.

The perception that we, Europeans and especially the French, had of

the 2004 Election was doubly warped. We could not have a clear view of what was going on out there firstly because most of our media here were both anti-American and left-leaning, and secondly since they screened what was “fit” for us

(17) an exit poll = un sondage “sortie des urnes”

(18) to flaunt = to display, often ostentatiously ; to parade

(19) the gist = the essential points or the general sense of a speech, etc ; the essence, thrust

(20) to apportion = to share, to distribute

(21) by the same token = likewise

(22) crass = insensitive (or very stupid)

(23) trivial = unimportant, inconsequential

to know according to their liberal²⁴ gospel. As a consequence of the partisan filtering, we came to believe that candidate Kerry would go fleeing to victory such was the anger and frustration of the American people. The election results showed that this was only wishful thinking on our part²⁵. Even the crowning of Michael Moore at the Cannes Festival could not buck the trend²⁶.

In America itself, the topic of the objectivity—or lack of it—of the mainstream media was often brought to the fore in the run-up to the election²⁷, especially by right-leaning commentators.

In a piece posted on October 22, 2004, on townhall.com, a conservative website with links to the Heritage Foundation, a powerful right-leaning think-tank, Paul Greenberg targeted what he called ‘liberal media bias’ (L.M.B.) and claimed he had found the vivid proof of its existence.

The proof was a memo from ABC’s political director, Mark Halperin, to his staff, dated Oct. 8, 2004, and leaked to Greenberg. Here are its highlights in Halperin’s own words:

It goes without saying that the stakes are getting very high for the country and the campaigns²⁸- and our responsibilities become quite grave.

... the current Bush attacks on Kerry involve distortions and tak-

ing things out of context in a way that goes beyond what Kerry has done.

Kerry distorts, takes out of context, and mistakes all the time, but these are not central to his efforts to win.

We have a responsibility to hold both sides accountable to the public interest, but that doesn’t mean we reflexively and artificially hold both sides “equally” accountable when the facts don’t warrant that.

Noting that the Bush camp increasingly complained about the New York Times’ coverage of the campaign and its alleged one-sidedness, Halperin went on:

This is all part of their efforts to get away with as much as possible with the stepped up, renewed efforts to win the election by destroying Senator Kerry at least partly through distortions.

It’s up to Kerry to defend himself, of course. But as one of the few news organizations with the skill and strength to help voters evaluate what candidates are saying to serve the public interest, now is the time for all of us to step up and do that right.

Greenberg commented:

“To summarize: Yes, our candidate may falsify now and then, but the other guy’s falsity is at the center of his campaign. This memo might as well be a declaration of war on

ABC’s part. It’s what every true believer thinks in the heat of an election season. But it’s unusual for a supposed unbiased newsman to think so. Or rather say so. In writing.”

“Liberal Media Bias isn’t just a feeling anymore; it’s a documented plan²⁹. Case closed. With a full confession.”

Greenberg allowed himself that ironic remark:

“The bias behind much of the news media Americans are fed isn’t exactly a surprise. But at least when you’re listening to right-wing talk radio, you know you’re listening to right-wing talk radio. And when you’re watching Fox News, you can be confident it’s fair and balanced³⁰ in favor of the right.”

In the same vein as Greenberg and on the very same electronic forum, townhall.com, Brent Bozell, President of Media Research Center and a regular contributor to The Washington Times, the Diamond’s³¹ only right-leaning paper, castigated what he tagged “The media’s elastic economy” in an item posted on Nov. 3, 2004.

To cut a long story short, Bozell’s contention was that the MSM assess identical or similar economic data differently depending on who leads the country. In other words, the interpretation of economic statistics becomes as slanted and unfair as the rest of the news, be it political or social. The conclusion is, obviously, that there’s no trusting the mainstream media and everything they claim should be taken with extreme caution. Journalistic impartiality has become obsolete, an outmoded value, and no longer features in the media’s unwritten code of conduct.

The main reason for Bozell’s ire at the MSM, namely network TV³², was the rendition by those media of the growth rate for the third quarter of 2004, 3.7%, released by the Department of Commerce in the final days of October, i.e. just prior

- (24) liberal = politically speaking, the adjective means left-leaning, left-wing, if not leftist!
- (25) This was wishful thinking on our part = nous prenions nos désirs pour des réalités
- (26) to buck the trend = renverser la tendance
- (27) in the run-up to the election = pendant / au cours de la période précédant l’élection, la période pré-électorale.
- (28) Campaign takes on a special sense here ; it means all the organisation supporting a campaign, mainly those who mastermind a candidate’s campaign (in the ordinary sense) from his headquarters.
- (29) A documented plan = ici, un plan dont on a des preuves tangibles
- (30) fair and balanced news = a promotional slogan used by Fox News Co. Appreciate the irony!
- (31) The Diamond = also known as Washington D.C., an allusion to the geometrical design of the capital, whose boundaries form a diamond
- (32) network TV = les grandes chaînes américaines (ABC, NBC, CBS)

to Voting Day. According to Bozell, all three major networks downplayed that robust result (the French equivalent was hardly a third of that!) which they did not want to credit the Bush Administration with. Bozell documents the case against the media :

“Weaker economic reports in 1996 and 2000 were painted as good news for the Clinton-Gore team. ‘The economy was slow but steady going into the last quarter’, NBC’s Tom Brokaw reassured viewers after a 2.2 percent growth report that came out right before Clinton’s reelection in 1996. ‘Many economists were encouraged by that, because it means inflation is under control and interest rates will stay low.’

For years later, CBS’s Dan Rather was pleased with the Clinton-Gore 2.7 percent growth rate reported right before the 2000 election. ‘There is a school of thought that

says this is overall good for the economy to keep it from overheating’, Rather told viewers.

But under Bush 41³³ in 1992, the exact same 2.7 percent growth rate issued right before the election was soundly panned³⁴. ABC’s Peter Jennings called it ‘more than economists had projected but, in many cases, less than meets the eye.’

Bozell’s conclusion :

“The networks don’t really care what the numbers are on the economy, but only about how they can be manhandled, manipulated and spun. Before voting, the networks ought to have allowed viewers to consider the raw data³⁵ on the economy before they had the numbers cooked³⁶.”

Rest reassured, however, my dear French readers, such things can only happen in America...

and dated March 10, 2001, on the background to the bill just prior to its discussion in the U.S. Senate.

He neatly summarised the main five arguments for and the major five against the proposed legislation.

Advocates claimed that campaign finance needed reforming because “soft money” was corrupting politics (argument n°1), special interests hid behind “issue ads” (argument n°2), campaign finance laws – passed in the wake of Watergate in 1974 and last updated in 1979 – were antiquated (argument n°3), fundraising distracted members of Congress from law-making and governing (argument n°4) and that candidates ought to be divorced from interest groups (argument n°5).

Opponents responded by contending that monetary contributions were assimilated to free speech (since the 1976 Supreme Court’s Buckley v. Valeo decision) and therefore protected by the First Amendment (argument n°1). They also said that soft money strengthened political parties in that they supplied them with the cash necessary to train candidates and promote voting among the non-voters (argument n°2). Their third argument was that contribution limits were too strict. In the fourth one, they argued unions would gain an unfair advantage under McCain-Feingold since “labor unions can spend their members’ dues for political purposes without consulting them”. Finally, McCain-Feingold would infringe on the right of association as it would prevent organisations, including non-profit-making ones, from discussing “legislative goals or strategy with members of Congress”.

Question four

Has McCain-Feingold purified politics? ■

“What is McCain-Feingold?”, you are going to ask. To which I could answer, sarcastically : “It is a blatant illustration that, even in legislative circles, hell can be paved with good intentions.” Allow me now to be less cryptic and more explicit.

McCain-Feingold is a campaign finance bill co-fathered by two senators, Republican John McCain of Arizona and Democrat Russell D. Feingold of Wisconsin as early as the mid-1990s.

The centrepiece of their legislation is a ban on “soft money” contributions to national political parties. “Soft money” differs from “hard money” in that it is money that is not given directly to campaigns and

therefore does not have to be reported.

McCain-Feingold was also aiming to restrict “issue ads”, usually bought by interest groups, corporations and labor unions to express their views on an issue that might figure in a campaign.

Derek Willis, a contributor on the staff of the Congressional Quarterly, wrote an illuminating piece, titled “Debating McCain-Feingold”

(33) Bush 41, i.e. W’s father, the 41st president of the USA (1989-92)

(34) to pan = to criticise very severely

(35) raw data = les données brutes, c’est à dire, ici, nettes, dépourvues de commentaires biaisés !

(36) to cook (facts, numbers, etc) is to falsify them, to change (or report) them in a dishonest way for one’s own (political, ideological, etc) advantage.

After a lot of travail³⁷ in Congress, which eventually passed it, the McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform came into force in Nov. 2002. Was it a success?

To judge by an editorial in the Wall Street Journal in December, 2002, aptly titled and subtitled “McCain-Feingold, RIP : In force for less than a month, campaign finance is already dead.”, it is hard to answer in the affirmative:

“By outlawing so-called soft money, or large donations to political parties, the reformers haven’t succeeded in removing money from politics. They have merely caused the cash to move away from the parties into more obscure, and less accountable, corners of American politics.”

“The reformers already admit as much themselves. They’re busily denouncing both Democrats and Republicans for creating new and legal ‘shadow committees’ to raise money that the formal entities can’t.”

In the run-up to the 2004 election, the Washington Post’s Charles Krauthammer (“This is Reform?”, August 13th, 2004) claimed that that reform “accentuate[d] the negative” :

“You wanted campaign finance reform. You got campaign finance reform. McCain-Feingold promised to take the money out of politics. If you believed that, you deserve what you got.”

“And what you got is an avalanche of money into politics this year...”

“All that McCain-Feingold did was to make it impossible to make huge

personal contributions to political parties. But if you have far more money than you can ever hope to spend, what to do? ... Play an even more important role in politics by bankrolling³⁸ your very own “527”, a tax-code loophole that enables the fat cats³⁹ to fund their own political advertising so long as they do not “coordinate” with the candidate.”

“The ads have another restriction. They cannot advocate *voting* for anyone. I love that part, for two reasons. First, it produces comical scripts that say, “President Bush, friend of Halliburton, likes taking food from the mouth of orphans. If you think that this is not nice, write President Bush and tell him so.” Of course, the ad buyers mean: “Vote Kerry.” But they cannot say so.”

“Second, I like the poetic justice⁴⁰.

The goo-goo do-gooders who endorsed campaign finance reform have another great cause: the awfulness of negative campaigning. Well, they have produced a system that is practically designed to produce negative ads.”

“So first you got Soros-funded Bush-the-monster ads. Now you get the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth ad (and book) accusing John Kerry of falsifying his military record.”

In short, the reform was a waste of time and energy, a confirmation that “The purification of politics is an iridescent dream”, as Kansas Republican Senator John James Ingalls wrote in the 19th century.

Question five

Should Michael Moore move to Canada? ■

Michael Moore’s self-appointed assignment in 2004 was a tall order⁴¹. Posing as the White Knight in shining armour determined to slay George the Evildoing Dragon, Mr Moore shot his fourth documentary as his own personal contribution to the Bush-bashing hysteria that had started the world over since the War in Iraq had been launched.

Fahrenheit 9/11 was supposed to scupper⁴² President Bush’s re-election move. The fact is that it back-

fired. Even people who were not Bush bigots were disappointed, if not disgusted, with Moore’s film.

David Kopel is one of them. Mr Kopel, a life-long Democrat who endorsed the Nader campaign in 2000, supports some but not all aspects of the war on terror.

After seeing the film, he wrote an essay for the Independence Institute, a think-tank in Colorado aiming to promote the principles of the Declaration of Independence (1776).

“Fifty-nine Deceits in Fahrenheit 9/11” is “a summary of a much longer report, available for free at www.davekopel.org”. Its purpose is to show that the Moore film is “a twisted, dishonest, paranoid, and hateful fantasy.” It is based on the idea that

(37) **Travail** : a classic false friend or deceptive cognate, the term means ‘very hard work’

(38) **bankrolling**= financing, supplying funds for

(39) **fat cats**= les gros bonnets

(40) **poetic justice**= retribution

(41) **a tall order** = a very difficult task

(42) **to scupper** = to wreck or ruin

“If all you know is what the main-stream media tell you, then you are living in a world of illusions. But you can’t free your mind if you merely replace one set of manipulative illusions with another (...).”

“In a democracy, we should try to convince our fellow citizens with facts and logical reasoning. To manipulate people with frauds and propaganda is to attack democracy itself.”

In a traditionally Moore-friendly paper, the Washington Post, Tommy Nguyen wrote a piece on June 12, 2004, describing pavement debaters after a showing of *Fahrenheit 9/11* in a D.C. cinema and reporting the highlights of their conversation (“To the Barricades! [Anyone Want the Rest of This Pop-corn?]”).

One of the debaters, Joe Brinker, 34, made a few illuminating points : “He stretched the truth!”

“Republicans would have had no breathing room whatsoever if Moore hadn’t wandered into that little extra inch that he doesn’t seem capable of resisting.”

“What if I, someone who is already convinced, came out of the movie and said : ‘Hmm. I know he stretched the truth on this, that and on the other thing.’ What’s the movie going to seem like for someone who comes in sceptical?”

This is just a sample of the reservations expressed on Michael Moore’s latest documentary. Cinema bugs surely know that *Fahrenheit 9/11* was the second documentary to have been awarded the top prize at the Cannes Festival. The first one had been Commandant Cousteau’s *The World of Silence*. Was it a case of : “After the *World of Silence*, now the *World of Spin*.”?

Of course, Mr Moore has not had to move to Canada. He can still enjoy his First Amendment rights in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave.

Since his re-election, George W. Bush has been quite busy and has made a few symbolic gestures.

He contributed to the promotion of diversity by nominating Condoleezza Rice to be Secretary of State, the first black woman to hold the post, to succeed the first black man, Colin Powell, in that position, no doubt “a groundbreaking moment in American racial history” (The New York Daily News, Nov 17th, 2004).

In the same article, the leader writer noted that few in the journalistic profession had trumpeted that “Rod Paige, the departing secretary of education, [had been] the first black to hold that job. Or that Ann Veneman, the departing secretary of agriculture, [had been] the first woman to hold that job. Or that Alberto Gonzales ... [would] be the first Hispanic attorney general⁴³. Or that Bush had one Arab-American and two Asian-Americans in his cabinet.”

And the writer went on :

“Given William Renhquist’s failing health, Bush likely will nominate an associate justice and a chief justice⁴⁴ of the Supreme Court. There has been talk that Clarence Thomas [a black judge] might get the top job. I don’t see it.

A more likely scenario is that ... Bush would elevate Sandra Day O’Connor to chief justice. ... Did I mention she would be the first woman to hold the job?”

President Bush also pledged, in a Nov.30th, 2004, speech, to “make international cooperation his administration’s top priority”. He also stated that he would “foster a wide international consensus” for “three great goals : ... building effective multinational and multilateral institutions and supporting effective multilateral action, ... fighting terrorism and promoting democracy.” (Dana Milbank, in the Washington Post, Dec 1st, 2004).

A good illustration of the promotion of democracy was undoubtedly the general election in Iraq, on January 30th, 2005, which was an unmitigated success (over 70% turnout) despite all the threats that had been hailed upon the electorate.

The Iraqi election echoed the words of the President in his second Inaugural Address, on Jan. 20, 2005 :

“The survival of liberty in our land increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands. The best hope for peace in our world is the expansion of freedom in all the world.”

On the domestic front, the task is awesome : reforming the social security system, upgrading schools, “building an ownership society”, etc. One thing seems certain: life is not likely to be a bed of roses for the Bush Administration till 2008.

S. B.

Reactions, commentaries at serge.basset@univ-lyon2.fr

(43) Attorney General = ministre de la justice

(44) Chief Justice = Président de la Cour Suprême fédérale