

A divided country will miss the Clinton era



SAINTS AND PROFITS

ERIC PFEIFFER

Bill Clinton must be smiling. In the months leading to the election, there was quite a buzz about his efforts to establish a meaningful legacy for himself and his presidency.

For a while, Clinton's hopes were riding on the man who aimed to succeed him in office, Vice President Al Gore. A Gore victory equaled a third Clinton term and a validation of the Clinton platform that has guided our country for the last eight years.

On the other hand, a victory for Texas Gov. George W. Bush equaled a rejection of the Clinton era and a return to the times of his predecessor, the man he defeated in '92, George H.W. Bush.

But a funny thing happened on election night: America wouldn't have either of them. Meanwhile, the other Clinton, Hillary, didn't just win her Senate bid; she devastated Rick Lazio in the nation's second most high-profile race.

Now, no matter who takes the White House, Bill Clinton has won. Again. America couldn't choose a new direction because most of us are pretty happy with the direction we're going. You can count on this: Whoever becomes the next president will make Bill Clinton look really, really good. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans can claim the moral high ground in the final rounds of this election.

Republicans spent the last two weeks scorching Democrats about their desire to re-evaluate thousands of disqualified Florida ballots in four democratic-leaning counties. The news was filled with so many references to "chads." I started to think the presidential election had turned into an old surfer movie.

The Republicans spoke of dignity and integrity, citing holy proclamations of the "constitutional crisis" sweeping across America. Remember impeachment? Yeah, those guys.

Fast-forward two weeks. This past weekend, overseas ballots were counted. More than 1,000 of those ballots, mostly from military bases, were tossed out because of irregularities similar to the disqual-

Give 'em two years, then it's God save the Queen



CAPTAIN SENSIBLE

PAT PAYNE

Like a bad dream, the mess in Florida is still haunting us. It's been 10 days since the first presidential contest of the new millennium, and we don't know yet who the First Baka is, because neither the Vice-Baka nor the Head Baka of Texas wants to admit that he stands a chance of losing Florida. The Vice-Baka has been dragging out the process, hoping magical pixies will make more Gore votes appear with every re-count, while the Texas Baka is prematurely redecorating the Oval Office.



Giovanni Salimena Emerald

ified ballots in Democratic counties.

The Sunday talk shows were filled with GOP heavyweights, such as Bush spokeswoman Karen Hughes, decrying the "disenfranchising of military men who are not having their votes counted."

Meanwhile, the Democrats couldn't help but point out that these ballots were not properly filed, and therefore, should not be counted.

Sound familiar? Yes, except the talking heads were breathing fire from the opposite mouths just days ago.

This process has nothing to do with right or wrong. It's all about winning. Florida Secretary of State Katherine Harris, a Republican, has done our country a disservice by trying to block re-counts just to ensure her candidate a victory. For those of you who don't know, she was co-chair of Bush's Florida campaign, along with another Bush, the governor named Jeb. Jeb has actually shown character lacking on both sides by recusing himself from the proceedings. He was always the better Bush, anyway.

On the other side, you have two Democratic legal victories coming from a Florida Supreme Court where Democratic governors appointed all seven justices. Sound suspicious? Well, it should.

The tragedy is that we don't seem to have any "Wise Men," as people on Capitol Hill call them, to step in and settle this in a bipartisan fashion. Where are the honorable men and women who can put politics aside and honestly try to figure out who received more votes in Florida?

Former Democratic President Jimmy Carter made such a suggestion, offering his services along

with former Republican President Gerald Ford. The response from Joe Lieberman: "An interesting idea. We'll have to look at it." Translation: Thanks, but no thanks.

Bill Clinton, we're going to miss you.

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Nothing good is going to come of this battle. If Bush wins, Democrats will be enraged about the whole Palm Beach fiasco (in which a minor civil servant used the ill-fated "butterfly" format to improve legibility) and will see it as yet another manifestation of the non-existent "vast right-wing conspiracy" which not only stole Florida but also rubbed many voters' faces in it.

If Gore wins, Republicans are going to be incensed, sensing a Democratic "dirty trick" in procrastinating and prolonging the election and possibly falsifying ballots (in Republicans' minds) through endless manual re-counts. In either case, someone's gonna be put out, and with the 50-50 split and polarized Congress, we have a recipe for gridlock, recrimination and four years of people screaming at each other. Just what this country

needs. We've already had 28 years of Dems and Repubs manning the trenches, sniping at each other's lines at every opportunity. Bubba Bill's indiscretions of the last eight years have only worsened this.

So, what are we going to do now?

I say we give two years to whoever gets elected. If by the midterm elections we've got gridlock and political turmoil because the loser keeps bringing up the word "theft," my solution is this: We finally give up and beg Great Britain to take us back.

"Sorry about that revolution fracas, old chaps. Pip-pip, cheerio, God save the Queen, pass the bangers and mash, Hail Blackadder and all that sort of rot." They could turn all our representatives into Members of Parliament, and perhaps allow our senators into the House of Lords.

Our Congress is acrimonious already, so Trent Lott, Dick Gephardt, Maxine Waters and the rest would fit right in at the House of Commons, where booing and shouting down the opposition speaker is not only a time-honored tradition, it's an art form. With the myriad political parties in Britain and the parliamentary makeup of the British government, the Republicans and the Democrats (to say nothing of Nader's whatchamacallits) would be forced to work together or perish. And oil scions like Bush and political royalty like Gore could get something of a reality check should they have to move into 10 Downing, the modest residence of Prime Ministers given as a sort of "gag gift" to the PM by King George II in 1732. The White House has its own theater and bowling alley. 10 Downing has

running water.

Besides, what would we really have to give up? So we'd drive on the other side of the road, eat something called "spotted Dick," pronounce "z" as "zed" and spell "armor," "color" and "favorite" with the letter "u." So what if soccer — I'm sorry, football — would replace baseball as the national sport? So what if every day at 4:30 p.m. (3:30 p.m. Mountain and Central) we would have to drink boiled leaves in water and eat light pastries?

At least we wouldn't have to worry about butterfly ballots and ambitious morons who may or may not be qualified to be president. Rule Britannia!

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