

The Campaign Ends

The nation will be breathing a vast, collective sigh of relief this weekend in the happy thought that at last the long, wearing, debilitating—and at times degrading—Presidential campaign is virtually over.

Rarely in modern times and never in recent years has there been a campaign in which the issues facing the nation have been so inadequately discussed by the two leading candidates; rarely has a campaign added so little to public knowledge; rarely has its end been so welcome.

In his frenetic dashing about the country, President Johnson stuck mainly to the safety of pious platitudes, interlarded with cloudy visions of the "Great Society." As a candidate, he rushed off in so many directions at such high speed that it is difficult to understand how—especially in the latter part of the campaign—he could possibly have carried out with effectiveness his functions as President.

Indeed, the question is raised whether an incumbent President running for re-election would not do himself, his party and his country a far greater service by running on his record and limiting to an absolute minimum his oratory, his travels and his baby kissing. But at least it can be said for Mr. Johnson that while his campaign seldom rose to the heights, it rarely descended to the depths—which is more than can be said of his opposition. In fact, of the Goldwater-Miller campaign, the less said the better.

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Despite its distressingly poor quality, this Presidential campaign has been an exceedingly important one. And despite the almost universal boredom that it has produced, it will probably bring out an unprecedented number of voters. This seeming paradox is, we believe, easily explainable because the American electorate fully understands not only that there really is a choice, as the Goldwater enthusiasts like to point out, but also that if the wrong choice is made, the nation will face foreign disaster and domestic chaos. The choice is not what it usually is in American Presidential elections: a choice between two variations of the middle. This time the choice is such that if President Johnson and his Administration are defeated, and Senator Goldwater and his adherents are elected, the country will be facing an upheaval of major proportions in both foreign and domestic policy.

While critical of its foreign policy in many particulars, we believe that the Johnson Administration is far more competent to deal with both America's friends and its opponents than a Goldwater Administration could conceivably be. The latter would be tempted to follow an all-or-nothing, black-or-white, win-or-lose approach that would surely destroy America's alliances and might ultimately destroy the world's civilization.

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Our differences with Senator Goldwater on domestic policy are legion; but in no area do we think his election would be more disastrous than in the broad field of civil rights. This is not because we think he is against civil rights; it is because we think he does not appreciate the necessity—nor in fact does he have the desire or intention—of exercising the continued strong pressure from the very peak of government essential to insure that equality before the law which is guaranteed to every American.

Defeat of the Goldwater-Miller ticket will help restore control of the Republican party to the ranks of reason and moderation and thereby strengthen a two-party system that has been seriously endangered by their nomination. But more important than this consideration is the fact that a Goldwater-Miller victory would divide the United States from its allies, would hearten and solidify its enemies, would represent a triumph for the radical right, a defeat of liberalism, a retrogression from the domestic policies that during the past generation have brought this country to its present state of prosperity. We hope and believe that the American electorate will give the Johnson-Humphrey ticket a resounding victory.