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# COMMON SENSE II

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Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today's series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.

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**December 2022**

**Post-Election Issue**

**Vol. 17 Issue 9**

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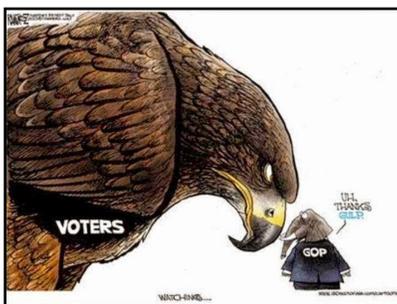
## What the Election Revealed

By Bob Passi

The election is over. Disaster has been averted. The red wave ended up as more of a ripple. Yes, there was some shifting around, but mostly the shift was toward a rational democracy and not toward autocracy and rule decided by violence intimidation, big lies, and half-truths.

The clear message of this election was that those citizens who found a way to vote in spite of the many efforts to restrict voting chose democracy and a system based on the rule of law and the basic time-tested processes of American democracy.

Our nation was taken to the brink of chaos by a leader who thought he could impose his will on this nation, ignore the safeguards of American democracy, and declare who shall rule and how they shall rule. He was a leader who was



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willing to release the dark gods of terrorism, white supremacy, racism, prejudice, intimidation, and violence to support his desires to remain in power and reshape this nation into a dictatorship.

The citizenry said, "No!!!"

This election did not solve our problems as a nation, nor did it resolve how to save the planet from global warming or even from wars. Those issues all remain. What also remains is a system called democracy, which can provide a means to resolve all these problems if we dare to confront the destructiveness of such tremendous income inequality.

We walked away from the very brink of the dissolution of democracy; now we must walk away from the destructiveness of the domination of money and from the existential threat of global warming.

It is not a time for celebration and complacency; instead, we must double down on using the tools that American democracy provides to resolve our issues, find workable solutions, and save the planet.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

<u>Event</u>	<u>Date /Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
After Election Office Open	Tues. & Thurs. 2:00-5:00	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30	Hybrid
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	3rd Wednesday 5:30	DFL Headquarters
2nd Harvest Volunteer Time	2nd Wednesday 1:30-3:30	2nd Harvest
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	February 8, 2023	conray@arvig.net

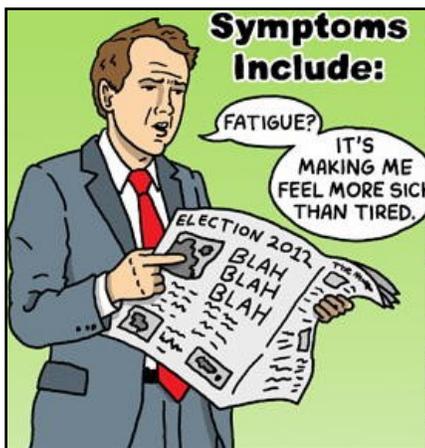
## Elections:

### The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

By Vicki Andrews

At last the mid-term elections are over, and I am relieved. I know elections are important. We live in a democracy, and we choose our leaders through the election process. Supposedly, the will of the people selects the person or persons who can best lead us through the next term of office—generally four years in our country. That is what is “good” about elections. It’s all about the “will of the people.” Some of the alternatives are monarchies, dictatorships, oligarchies, communism—which theoretically doesn’t have to be totalitarian, but usually is, so we really don’t want to go there!

One of the “bad” things about the elections is the cost. This will include the financial cost, the personal cost of those running, the cost of bad feelings among families, within families, between friends, etc.



There are other costs also, such as the cost of our time taken up by campaigning if we are the candidate, or our time in working for our candidate of choice, or our time in watching debates between candidates, our time in reading articles about the various candidates, our time joining in discussions about the candidates and issues and so on. Remember, this is our duty as citizens of a democracy. We need to take plenty of time to learn about each candidate in order to make a well-reasoned, intelligent decision as to the best person for the job, for whom we should vote, and whom we can trust. Sometimes it’s an easy decision; sometimes it’s much more difficult.

What about the ugliness of elections? These are very stressful times for many. The candidates and their families are under extreme stress. Winning or losing can be critical for a person. Elections cost money. Often candidates need to borrow money or sink their life savings into the campaign; they may have to take time off work (on which most people depend for survival); they may see their family members and friends contribute mon-

ey they can’t really afford to help the candidate win the election. If they lose, they may suffer financially and may have to see their families and friends struggle to get by because of the money they contributed.

Additionally, in the current political climate, elections can bring on strong feelings among the people.

Many people get so involved in working for the candidates of their choice



that they lose sight of other important issues. Friendships are often frayed if folks are working for or cheering on candidates—or political parties—that their friends oppose. Family relationships can end up suffering for similar reasons, with family members working for and supporting different candidates or (heaven forbid!) different political parties.

That’s in normal times. During this era of gun violence and mass shootings, there is the additional stress and concern about an angry person armed with a high velocity rifle showing up at a political rally or candidates’ debate to share their ideas in a violent manner.

Well, the good news is I think elections are over for two years. The bad news? Campaigning for the next election will begin fairly soon. I hope it’s not until after the Holidays. Long after!

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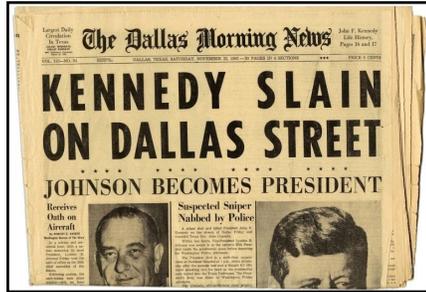
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*\*computer generated/volunteer labor\**

November 22, 2022

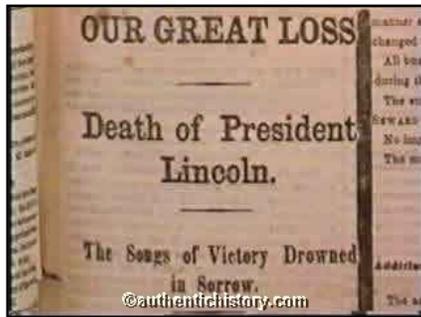
By Bob Passi

Over two generations (59 years) have passed since the assassination of JFK shifted the nation from the possibilities of peace back to a continuation of the Cold War with the USSR. It has been over five generations (157 years) since the Lincoln assassination chose a white supremacy future for this nation. Peace and reconciliation are fragile and difficult to build. These things are easily shattered by bullets, replacing the will of the people and democratic processes with a continuation of the status quo.



https://www.greenvillepost.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/JFKshot-dallasPaper.jpg

We pick up the pieces and try to fit them back together, but we only get a framework empty of the idealism,



https://www.historyonthenet.com/authentichistory/1860-1865/1-images/ Newspaper\_Headline\_on\_Lincolns\_Death\_1865.jpg

the heart of what could have been a triumph of democracy. Once we make such events possible by obfuscation and misdirection, by lies and cover-ups, we further damage the very

heart of the democratic processes and redefine leadership in a democracy as a mere projection of power, not all that different from any other nation—democratic or not—simply by following its “national interests,” as defined by those in power.

It began with the cover-up of the Kennedy assassination. Next came the cover-up of the realities of the war in Viet Nam. We watched Nixon’s subversive attempts to manipulate the democratic processes, and we watched as he was later pardoned by a hand-picked replacement.

We have seen the extension of CIA secret operations and the intervention in other governments and nations and the manipulation of information on the domestic and international level. We have seen the extension of surveillance and the security state.

We have watched as business interests took over the democratic process and the Powell Memo instructed them to do. We watched as our progres-

sive tax system that funded democracy was turned on its head, defunding social programs and civic projects, leaving us with a crumbling infrastructure as the tax burden was shifted away from those with the wealth to the middle class. The result has been stagnant wages for workers and soaring profits for those on top, leading to an obscene income inequality not seen in this nation since the Gilded Age. We have watched government functions become privatized and sold off to provide profit streams for corporations. We have seen the transfer of more and more power and control to corporations and an economic elite.

**What Does it Mean?**

**As a percentage of income:**

- **Regressive** – Greater percentage of income in lower-income taxpayers
- **Flat** – Everyone pays the same percentage
- **Progressive** – Greater percentage of income in higher-income taxpayers

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War becomes both a political diversion and a profit source for corporate America. We have seen war and weapons become the heart of our national economy with our “forever wars” funded by more than 50% of our tax dollars every year. We see the destructiveness of a nation drowning in guns with the resulting gun violence.



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We see a cult of the hero being built up around our soldiers, sent more to protect corporate profits than to defend or spread democracy. After their time in the military, the nation forgets them with underfunded or non-existent programs, leaving them to fend for themselves or rely on an ever-expanding list of charities, asking the public to fund what the nation has refused to do, because it would be “too expensive.” All we do on the national level is to tell those who served that they are heroes and that we are thankful for their service. Are we really thankful? They need and deserve more than lip service from the nation in order to mend their lives.

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

We have seen the voices of the workers being muffled and muted with the destruction of unions, beginning with Reagan.

- ◆ We watched an election being stolen by a simple majority in the Supreme Court in the 2000 election.
- ◆ We watched as our civil rights were greatly diminished by the laws after 9/11.
- ◆ We watched our elections become more and more corrupted by the “dark money” allowed by the Supreme Court.
- ◆ We watched the debacle of the trillion dollar wars of Iraq and Afghanistan.
- ◆ We watched the voting rights of the citizenry being restricted and manipulated away.
- ◆ We watched as financiers manipulated us into a crisis without any accountability or penalties for those financiers, while ordinary people and the world suffered.
- ◆ We watched as the ordinary citizens were being left out of the political process until Trump took advantage of that reality and rose to leadership, telling them what they so desperately had been waiting to hear: that they mattered.

But the ordinary people did not matter to him in his world of winners and losers. Instead, his leadership was the culmination of using the office of the Presidency as a base to project his personal power throughout the nation and the world. Even when voted out of office, he refused to acknowledge defeat, spreading the Big Lie that the elections were simply a means of stealing power from him.



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We watched in shock and awe as the Capitol, the building most clearly connected with the democratic processes, was

stormed under his instigation. He had even wanted to be personally leading the rebellion, only to be stopped by the Secret Service.

Even now, he seems not to be held accountable. It

has been nearly two years since the January 6<sup>th</sup> events, and it looks as though it may not be resolved for another two years. All of our institutions seem to be very reluctant to hold anyone with wealth or power accountable for their actions. The law is only used to obfuscate and slow the process down. We all know what would happen to an average citizen under those circumstances—Lord forbid that they be of another race or religion.

The result is that those who do not want change have developed tools to prevent change. They have found ways to thwart the will of the people and the democratic processes. They have used propaganda, intimidation, manipulation, force, and even violence to prevent change in an entrenched system that allows them to create a legal framework to prevent change, while they continue to consolidate their power and abuse and exploit the populace.

Yet under all of this, the people still exist in great numbers, and they see what an abomination this system has become under the control of those who want only to protect their power. It is unsustainable, and the growing citizens’ movements will unseat them from what they see as their unassailable position.

Change is the natural order of the universe, including our planet and all of life. Those who would prevent change are thwarting a necessary natural process. Without change, growth stops, and things begin to wither and die. We must work diligently on the side of sustainable change and human development to allow the changes necessary to continue on this planet. We, the people, in the mid-term elections returned us back to democracy from the brink of autocracy. Yet, we are still on the brink of the destructiveness of global warming.

**If their system is built to prevent change, then we must turn our backs on that system and find human ways to work around it. We must break the grip of those who would prevent change by finding workable alternatives to their unsustainable system. We must revive the American heart to provide the necessary courage to create the change required for our survival. Let us be the generation which creates that change.**



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## The Enemies Within

By Valerie Conner

For its own security, a nation should always look about for its enemies. They include enemies both foreign and domestic as our oath to the Constitution specifies. I was aware of the increasing membership in the Communist Party USA in the 1930s. Fortunately, FDR's New Deal satisfied enough in the movement to make it a relative non-player. I was also aware that early on in the lead up to WWII many prominent public figures here and abroad such as the Duke of Winsor and Charles Lindbergh were favorably inclined toward the Nazi movement. I was not aware of the extent to which the Nazis utilized members of our government including at least 24 members of Congress.

In her excellent Podcast, *Rachel Maddow Presents: Ultra*, she chronicles the infiltration of and efforts to overthrow our government in the 1940s.

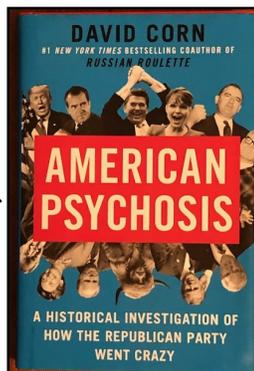


<https://www.rachelmaddow.com/wp-content/uploads/RMULTRA.jpg>

Charitably, we can say the politicians involved came from an isolationist position. They wanted us to stay out of the war: it didn't have anything to do with us, so we should

have nothing to do with it. In short, it was a short-sighted "America First" attitude. Racism and particularly anti-Semitism espoused by radio preachers, for example, also influenced the America Firsters. In eight riveting episodes, she tells the stories of who was involved, how, how much, and what happened to them. It's worth a listen.

I also have been relatively well schooled in the Republican Party history with the radical right but I missed the extent of the danger the John Birch Society, for example, posed. We tend to think that this nation has been on solid ground since the end of the Civil War until Trump upset the apple cart. Not so. In *American Psychosis: a Historical Investigation of How the Republican Party Went Crazy*, David Corn traces the philosophical



threads of pre-Trumpism from post-WWII to the present. In general, the philosophy of the ultra-conservative wing of the Republican Party has its roots in fear and hate. Racism and anti-Semitism, fear, hate, and conspiracies of "the other" have always been central to their recruitment. Again, isolationism is prominent. They proudly acclaim "America First" without realizing that ultimately that means America Last.

The John Birch Society was started in 1956 by Robert H. W. Welch, Jr. of Welch candy fame. He sold a select core of "upstanding" power brokers such as Fred Koch, father of Charles and David Koch, on conspiracies of the internal enemies of life as they preferred, of Communists, of public education, of labor rights, and so forth. Over the years, the Society was able to infiltrate the Republican Party from the scary right.



<https://duanegraham.files.wordpress.com/2010/10/john-birch-society.jpg?>

Corn examines how party leaders and candidates dealt with this financial and ideological influence. Like the Republican candidates of today, they tried to balance using the Society's money and membership to their advantage while not driving away the saner electorate of the middle. Goldwater pretty much embraced them; Reagan was more subtle but nonetheless beholden to that wing. The right wing media were an essential tool of this movement.

Fast forward to today when no one can deny the existence of these right wing fanatics and their scary influence on the party and our government and our future as a constitutional democracy. The complicity of the media in general and the fringe media of the right is fundamental to Trumpism's success. The basis of their drawing power is to preach fear and hate. Be afraid; be very afraid.

The recent election may indicate that a slim majority of Americans are awakening to the threat we face. That is step one to defeating it. The internal Nazi threat was defeated among other events by solid investigative work by the FBI and others as well as pure dumb luck. Loyal Americans willing to stand up against insurrection and a judicial system hanging on by a thread may save us again.

Step two is to resist fear and hate mongering. We can and should be better than that. The future is in our hands.

## Here's to a Progressive Future

By Valerie Conner

To many people elections and a New Year mark times of change, of looking forward to a new beginning and to doing things a bit differently, which we hope is for the better. The same is true for *Common Sense II*.

I have been editing *CSII* for almost 12 years. In general, I have been proud of the contributions the many wonderful writers have made and in the newsletter itself. Lately, however, fewer people have been contributing: some contributors have died, others have “aged out,” and I think some have just run out of steam. Life's been a long, tough slog the past few years. COVID and politics have ground a lot of us down.

The outcome of the election, while not all we could have wished for, has given us the ability to breathe a sigh of relief from our worst fears. We still need to keep the faith and promote progressive or liberal ideas; we just don't have to be quite so urgent about it.

For that reason, I think this is a good time to relax our publication timetable a bit. Instead of doing ten or eleven issues a year, I plan to do six or seven—every other month or so. Depending on how that works out, *CSII* may flourish and return to a monthly schedule or recognize that all good things must at some point come to an end.

I have truly enjoyed editing *CSII* and am reluctant to cease publication entirely, but I, too, need a bit of a break. You, the readers and writers, have been very supportive over the years. Thank you.

In the meantime, I welcome your feedback (please send any thoughts to me at [conray@arvig.net](mailto:conray@arvig.net)) and any articles you may want to contribute to future issues. Usually, I send out a general topic as a suggestion for an upcoming issue. I will continue to do that, so if you'd like to get that information, let me know.

In the meantime, take care, don't despair, and have a wonderful holiday season and 2023. Val



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## The Coming of the Light

By Bob Passi

The holiday season celebrates the coming of the light. Whether it is seen as a natural phenomenon with the solstice or in a more spiritual or metaphysical context, it is about ending a period of growing cold and darkness with its attending shadows, fears, and defensiveness and the beginning of the slow process of illumination and hope.

My, can we use a bit more illumination in these dark and troubling times! The illumination can clarify our common human needs without which we are far too vulnerable:

- \* The need for family, friends, community.
- \* The need to rediscover unity and joy.
- \* The need for a stable society with a sense of security, especially economically.
- \* The need for cooperation in dealing with universal issues like the threats of environmental change and how to help those most impacted by the results of those changes.
- \* The need for cooperation to deal with pandemics and other health related issues that have no national borders.
- \* The need to find a path to peace so that our resources can be used to work together to resolve human problems.
- \* The need for democracy instead of rule by elites.
- \* The need for leadership with a sustainable vision of humanity and nature.
- \* The need for balance and harmony.
- \* The need for equality, justice, and acceptance of differences.
- \* The need to nurture our fellow human beings: the elderly, the suffering, and especially the children.

We need to continue to focus on these human issues and turn our backs on those who would focus on competition, rejection, darkness, fear, and vulnerability.

**Let there be light!**