

The John Locke Society

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“Winning is not a sometime thing: it's an all the time thing . . . Winning is a habit. Unfortunately, so is losing.”
Vince Lombardi

The 2000 election presents the Republican Party the opportunity to regain control of the U.S. government for the first time in several decades. George W. Bush gives Republicans good reason to be optimistic of exploiting this opportunity. Many Conservatives, however, have no reason to be hopeful that his presidency will be anything more than *George Bush—The Sequel*. Bush is seen by many Conservatives as a pseudo-Conservative at best, one that makes conservative-sounding platitudes but who in fact is not ideologically principled or even a Conservative at all. Examples that are often cited are his statements that Republicans are “out of touch” and “too extreme” and his alleged adoption of Bill Clinton’s “triangulation” strategy. This issue poses an enigma that has bedeviled Conservatives for many years—whether Republicans should nominate less than ideologically perfect candidates who are nevertheless likely to win.

The Republicans, however, must win in 2000 and George W. far and away has the best chance of any Republican of doing so. A President Bush would be far preferable to a President Bradley or Gore in a number of critical areas—Supreme Court nominees, social issues, taxes, and spending. While Bush may not be the perfect conservative candidate ideologically speaking, he certainly will be the most conservative presidential candidate. Bush also embraces positions on issues such as 2nd Amendment rights, hate crimes, education vouchers and defense that are near and dear to the hearts of Conservatives. Besides, only by winning can ideology be put into practice. Winning is a prerequisite and should control everything else. Furthermore, the reality of politics is that once elected it is nearly impossible for an ideologue to completely implement every single principle of his ideology. What is important is to elect a candidate who, while ideologically sound, is a pragmatist and does not insist on ideological purity. Such a President is more likely to be effective in implementing conservative principles. In George W. Bush, Conservatives may not have an ideal candidate this time around, but if nothing else, controlling future Supreme Court nominations makes winning in 2000 everything. By losing again in 2000, Republicans run the risk of making losing the presidency a habit.

But, the Chairman wonders, might winning in 2000 be too costly? America appears to be on the brink of deciding whether many significant issues will be addressed through conservative solutions or tried-and-failed liberal ideas. Social security, education, taxation, health care and abortion are all susceptible to conservative proposals that are being taken more seriously than ever. It certainly does Conservatives no good for a Republican to win the 2000 election if the Republican presidential candidate does not have any firm conservative ideology to put into practice once elected. Such an outcome will merely lead to a lack of direction in governing and create a leadership void that liberals will fill. The raging tide of liberalism can only be overturned by electing an ideological Conservative as President who has a conservative agenda that he will insist on implementing. If Conservatives help to elect a pragmatist who does not have a resolutely conservative ideology, the result will be that little or nothing that Conservatives want done will happen, compromises will occur, and the scourge of liberalism will continue unchecked. The Chairman also wonders whether winning in 2000 might be ultimately more destructive of the conservative cause if a moderate Republican President himself participates in the repudiation of conservative principles. Finally, experience teaches Republicans that nominating presidential candidates who are not clear ideological Conservatives is a recipe for losing. Witness Bush in ‘92, Dole in ‘96, and Ford in ‘76 versus Reagan, an ideological Conservative, who won resoundingly in ‘80 and ‘84.

Seeing no other way around this conundrum, the Chairman herewith calls upon the Members and guests of the John Locke Society to do battle at the seventh *Ronald Wilson Reagan Debate Caucus* and thereupon joust by debating

Resolved: Winning is Everything!

The Society will assemble **Thursday, November 18th**, in the Weatherford Room of the Royal Oaks Country Club (7915 Greenville Avenue, Dallas). The Provostery will open at **6:30 p.m.** (finger sandwiches, select cheeses, and a cash bar are available). The Chairman will gavel the Caucus to order at precisely **7:15 p.m.** Gentlemen are reminded to adorn proper neckwear; ladies should adhere to a similar sartorial standard. Literary presentations are encouraged. Please direct any questions to the Chairman at 972-417-1916 or at *dogden@gte.net*.