



**Your on the
Street Reporter**



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The Herd Rule and Political Parties

Articles on the 2020 Presidential Election and Subsequent Events

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The Herd Rule and Political Parties¹

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The herd rule is based on the idea that individuals in a group often do not act individually, but collectively. Herd behavior occurs in many forms of life: herds of cattle, herds of sheep, flocks of birds, schools of fish, and herds of humans.

Humans often act as a herd during football games, boxing matches, riots, strikes, marches, demonstrations, and other group events. The collective herd dictates the actions of the individual, whose behavior is reinforced, even dictated by the group. Quite often, the herd rule indeed rules.

Herd Behavior

It was heartening to witness some of the Republicans in Congress criticize President Trump for his role in the January 6 incident.

Based on Senator Mitch McConnell's history of being tied to the hip of Trump on just about all issues, I was surprised that he, "flatly blamed President Trump...for the violent rampage at the Capitol on January 6, saying that the mob that stormed the building had been 'fed lies' and 'provoked by the president' to carry out its assault."²

Later, McConnell softened his tone and also has come out against impeaching Trump. One can only conclude that this man goes with the tide---staying with the herd---which is no surprise. As long as the issue is favorable to him and his party, he will support it. McConnell first, party second, the nation third.

Several other Republican senators proclaimed the riot had led them to change their stand on the presidential election, and they would now support the electoral college vote count.

Now they support the presidential election results? In their minds, if such exist, January 6 somehow altered the vote tallies. The Capitol assault and the number of votes in the election had nothing to do with each other. The rioters were unable to get their hands on the ballots, so the vote numbers never changed.

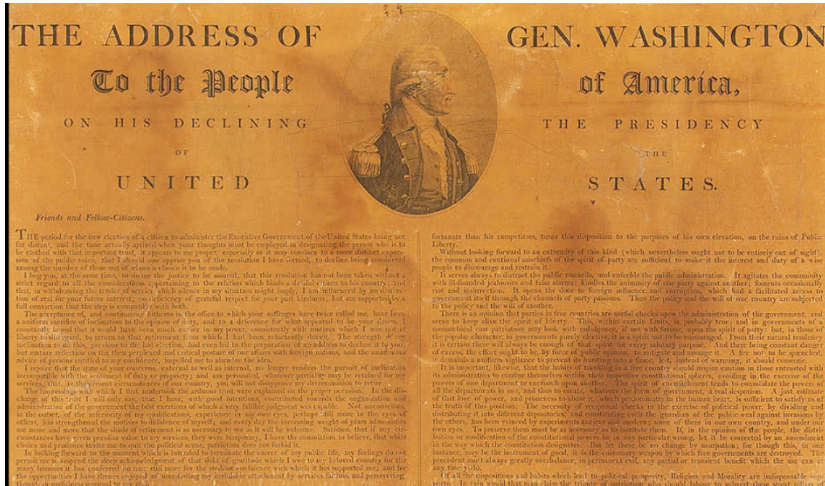
What changed was the ever-shrinking spine of these legislators and their inability to leave their herd; that is, their party. Some of them refuted Trump after January 6. Now, they are visiting him at his Mar-a-Lago estate. With very few exceptions, the Republicans think the president's participation in what could have been the destruction of the Capitol building and even deaths of congressional law makers is not impeachable.

George Washington's Warnings

While nearing the end of his second term as the US President, George Washington wrote a letter intended for America's citizens to read. It was first published on September 19, 1796, and was titled "The Address of Gen. Washington to the People of America."

¹ Cover picture courtesy of <https://www.art.com/products>.

² AOL, *New York Times*, and other media.



A copy of the letter, as published in the *American Daily Advertiser*, is shown in this figure.

The letter is lengthy and covers a broad range of subjects. For the issues discussed in this article, here are his thoughts on political parties:

“The alternate domination of one

faction over another, sharpened by the spirit of revenge, natural to party dissention, which in different ages and countries has perpetrated the most horrid enormities, is itself a frightful despotism. But this leads at length to a more formal and permanent despotism. The disorders and miseries which result gradually incline the minds of men to seek security and repose in the absolute power of an individual; and sooner or later the chief of some prevailing faction, more able or more fortunate than his competitors, turns this disposition to the purposes of his own elevation, on the ruins of public liberty.”

Recently, the Republican Party held their Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Orlando, Florida. This get-together is to bolster the party and unify its members to Republican Party fealties.

Below are several comments made by party members who attended the conference as well as observations of Elaina Plott in a *New York Times* article (February 28, 2021).

Meanwhile, their constituents’ devotion to Mr. Trump only hardened. For many voters, Mr. Trump became the party. And at CPAC, many of the thousands of attendees sporting Make America Great Again hats made it clear that their loyalties no longer lay with the institution itself.

Despite four years of professions of fealty to Mr. Trump from the party’s elected officials and their orienting of the G.O.P. around his image, dozens of conservatives this weekend bristled at the Republican label, castigated the party’s current congressional leadership and vowed to leave the party altogether should Mr. Trump decide not to run for a second term in 2024.



“We’re so disgusted by Republicans that, honestly, if Trump’s not running, we don’t care who wins,” Sany Dash said as she worked at her Trump merchandise booth [shown in this figure].

Ms. Dash’s store, Bye Bye Democrats, was bustling on Saturday as CPAC attendees browsed bejeweled MAGA clutches, plush elephants and a tapestry featuring an image of Mr. Trump drinking coffee accompanied by text reading, “The best part of waking up is Donald Trump is president.” (“We’ve sold probably 1,400 Nancy Pelosi toilet paper rolls here,” she said. “Our toilet paper is always a hit.”)

Read the quote from Washington again in relation to the comments made by attendees at CPAC. Washington might have been clairvoyant. He identifies the very dangers in evidence today in America’s political party system.

Yes, system. Trump is not the problem. He is a symptom of the problem. If present trends continue, it will make no difference if Trump runs or does not run for president. Someone else of the same mentality will fill-in for him, and will be supported by the same cadre of people who suffer from The Ignorant Therefore Doctrinaire Syndrome.

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The elected Republicans’ indignation has waned as they have come to realize that separating themselves from the herd, the party, will not help them in their future activities on the Hill and their re-election chances in a gerrymandered America.

They remain captives of Trump, who is not departing. The Republicans have come to realize if they do not support Trump, he will leave their party and start a new one, taking a substantial block of Congress members and voters with him. Result? A split party at the mercy of the Democrats.

Trump also realizes he cannot make a break from the party. To do so would also splinter the party and likely doom any chances he might have for taking back the presidency.

There is much more at stake than a congressional seat or the power of a political party. Below is a quote from Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a victim of Stalin’s gulags and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. (Note: Where Solzhenitsyn used the word “evil” I have used the word “wrongdoing.” I do not think the congresspeople to be evil, but as defenders of America and our Constitution, they are failing us.)

In keeping silent about [wrongdoing], in burying it so deep within us that no sign of it appears on the surface, we are *implanting* it, and it will rise up a thousand fold in the future. When we neither punish nor reproach [the unlawful], we are not simply protecting their trivial old age, we are

thereby ripping the foundations of justice from beneath new generations. It is for this reason, ...that [younger generations] are growing up “indifferent.” Young people are acquiring the conviction that foul deeds are never punished on earth, that they will always bring prosperity.³

The few Republicans who declared they would vote for impeachment cut themselves away from the herd. They have been excoriated by the herd for being disloyal to their party. It makes no difference if a Republican or a Democrat actually votes his/her conscience, say, for the good of the country. In this regard, America has come to resemble some of those third-world countries we used to mock: Me first, party second, nation third.

Here is another quote from a reporter, Alexis Coe, who had this to say about political parties and other thoughts and warnings from Washington:

The American Revolution was successful in no small part because Americans...put country first. “The name of American,” Washington wrote, “must always exalt the just pride of patriotism more than any appellation derived from local discriminations.” If voters remained loyal to a party, he feared, the party would soon become corrupt, solely focused on maintaining power: “cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men well be enabled to subvert the power of the people to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.”⁴

All Americans, Red or Blue, should heed Washington’s warnings about political parties and the danger of their creating autocrats.

³ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*, abridged edition authorized by the author (Harper & Row, New York, 1985) 81.

⁴ “This is why Washington feared political parties,” Alexis Coe, *The Spokesman Review*, January 10, 2021, Opinion Section, E2.