



Column / Don Newman

Sorry for Getting It Right

I am sorry. I was right. In the September-October edition of *Policy* I outlined how Donald Trump planned to win the presidency of the United States.

As the results came in on the night of November 8, it turned out that he had followed the blueprint I had outlined, captured the industrial “rust belt” states around the Great Lakes and won.

I admit, I watched the returns with mixed emotions. Satisfied that I had correctly seen how the race would unfold, but shocked that the Americans had elected as their president a liar, a misogynist, racist, bigot, tax evader with a temper, little curiosity and a short attention span.

As well, Trump has no experience in government or governing, no military experience and no interest in public policy.

Now, Trump is setting off on a four-year mandate to lead the United States, and by extension, the free world. Some optimists have tried to equate Trump’s victory over Hillary Clinton with Ronald Reagan’s defeat of Jimmy Carter in 1980. After all, Reagan turned out to be, by many estimations, the best president of the second half of the 20th century.

As comforting as that comparison would be, it is inaccurate. When he defeated Carter, Reagan had already been governor of California for two terms. True, he had been a movie actor for much of his career, but he had acquired governing experience in the biggest state of the union, with a population slightly larger than all of Canada.

Even more important, while Reagan’s

reputation was that he didn’t like to concern himself with details, that turned out to be his greatest strength. Carter was a one-term President, and when he was defeated and Reagan came to office, the new president wisely staffed much of his administration with people who had served quite recently in government in the administrations of Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. People like George Schultz, Casper Weinberger, Jim Baker and quite a few others knew the files, knew how government worked and knew how to deal with Congress.

By and large, Trump’s cabinet is populated by people like himself; wealthy business people with no government experience, no foreign or domestic policy experience and little indication that they have much interest in either. We are about to see how that turns out.

While we get ready for whatever comes from President Trump, it is almost certain to continue what has become a very unpleasant trend. His election capped the most crude, divisive and unaccountable campaign in American history. Trump remains so unaccountable that instead of meeting with reporters as candidates have always done in the past, Trump just sends out tweets on Twitter commenting on whatever crosses his mind.

Journalists will now have to come to terms with how they deal with this development. So far, fact checking by major media organizations doesn’t seem to have done much good. In an era where the Oxford dictionaries now recognize “post-truth” as a word, people seem to disregard anything that does not conform with their own

prejudices and believe instead information that confirms their biases.

Trump’s improbable claim that he would bring back industrial manufacturing jobs certainly motivated white unemployed blue collar workers in winning margins in both 2008 and 2012 but this time ensured Trump’s victory.

But the lack of support from black Americans who traditionally vote Democratic and twice elected the first black president was also a big factor in Clinton’s loss.

Clinton lost Michigan by a slim 12,000 votes. In this election in Wayne County, which encompasses Detroit and is almost all black, 78,000 fewer people voted than in 2012. If only 13,000 of the stay-at-homes had voted, Clinton, not Trump, would have won the state.

In Wisconsin, Clinton lost the state by 27,000 votes. In the state’s big city, Milwaukee, which is majority black, 39,000 fewer people voted than did in 2012 for Barack Obama. It is a fair guess that there as well most of the non-voters this time were black.

Trump had claimed during the campaign that black Americans would vote for him because they had nothing to lose. They didn’t vote for him. But by enough of them not voting at all it turns out that they did have something to lose. And so did everybody else. **P**

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