

## Black Wednesday

Twice in my life, I have been nervous about what was happening in US politics. The first time was when President **Richard Nixon** was being investigated over his possible involvement in the burglary of the Washington D.C. **Watergate** office building in 1972. The burglary became known as the "Watergate Scandal". Nixon had secretly taped conversations in his office. When investigators discovered Nixon had tapes of secretly recorded discussions in his office, they naturally wanted to hear the tapes.

Now here was the tension that myself and others experienced; you had the full weight of the legal system demanding the release of the tapes on the one hand, and Richard Nixon as Supreme Commander of US military on the other, refusing to hand over the tapes. The world nervously waited to see what was going to happen. It was a case of the wishes of the president, united with military might, versus the demands of the law.

One commentator in the US reported that the atmosphere was such that you could cut it with a knife. That's exactly what I experienced as I read about the unfolding drama in the newspapers in Sydney Australia, thousands of kilometres from the centre of the action. The law won. On 30<sup>th</sup> July 1974, Nixon complied with the court order and released the tapes. The world breathed a collective sigh of relief. Nixon resigned from his office in August 1974.

### Black Wednesday

The second period of tension came on **Wednesday 06 January**. Arguably the darkest Wednesday in America's recent history. On this day, then president, Donald Trump incited thousands of supporters gathered at the White House. He repeated false claims of electoral fraud in the November 2020 election. The supporters angrily marched down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Capital Building (the seat of the legislative branch of the US federal government). The mob smashed their way into the building. In the chaos which followed, four rioters and one Capitol Police officer were killed. The rioters were eventually removed by police officers. It was the first time the building had been violently occupied since 1814. This was the second time the world witnessed a clash between a president and the rule of law in the US. Thankfully, the law won. It was a win for democracy.

In Australia, if an engineer sends workers into a building when there is a reasonable expectation that the building could collapse at any moment, resulting in injury and death. He will be accountable if death or injury follows. He is liable to face the full weight of the law.

It is hard to fathom how Trump could send a large group of people into the Capitol Building, and not expect that death and injury is likely to be the outcome, given that it is heavily guarded. People in the military - even at the lowest ranks - must have been questioning the competency of their Commander-in-Chief when he sent unarmed civilians on this harebrained mission. He should have exercised a bit of leadership and told the protesters not to venture inside the building. So what can we make of Donald Trump?

### Donald Trump

The positives:

- He stood up to the North Korean dictator **Kim Jong-un**, who was becoming increasingly belligerent.
- He also stood firm against the Chinese dictator, **Xi Jinping**.
- He removed the Russian engineered anti-virus programme (Kaspersky) from government computers.
- He alerted the free world to the dangers of using Chinese manufactured mobile phones.
- He has pushed back on the Chinese stealing trade secrets, a practice they have engaged in over a long period of time.
- He banned the use of government money for abortions.
- In some areas of the US, he improved the economy.

### The negatives:

Before reporting on his negatives, I should declare my political leanings. Here in Australia, I am primarily Liberal, which would make me Republican in the US.

### Some of his beliefs lacked sound judgment

For instance, he believed a story on the Internet that **Barak Obama** was not born in the US and therefore, not legally president. To most clear thinking people, this story does not have credibility because there are government agencies which check on the credentials of any person running for the highest office in the land - they are not on a witch-hunt. Also, any party putting forward a candidate for office will do a thorough check of the credentials, because failure to do so could result in a large waste of money, and a high degree of embarrassment. An opposing party, on learning that the candidate they are contesting is not qualified, might wait for an opportune time to reveal the embarrassing news. I couldn't imagine that even the Marijuana Party - a political party in Australia in the 1970s - would fail to check their candidate. And finally, what would you do with the legislation that the president had signed off on if he wasn't legally president? This is another reason why government officials will check that the top man is qualified.

Obama waited for Trump to repeat his false claim several times, then responded by showing the relevant documents to the press. Trump was later publicly humiliated by Obama for holding onto his baseless belief. He told Trump at a public gathering just prior to his taking office that he could perhaps investigate fake moon landings.

Trump went on to back another false story on the Internet, that being, the COVID-19 disease is just the common flu. This false claim (reported on in *Time*, 30 November 2020, p. 27), had the potential to support Trump because he was desperate to keep industry going in order to help his re-election prospects. In the end, this false belief led to some loss of political support - and many deaths.

Trump contracted COVID-19 and made light of the disease when he emerged from hospital. In a photo of him standing on the steps, I counted seven doctors standing behind him. That's a lot of support for a mild medical condition! I will remind readers at this point that Boris Johnston (British PM) was hospitalised with the disease. He later praised a

nurse who stayed with him through the night to give him adequate care. He was very ill.

Many of those who lost loved ones to the corona virus looked at their dead young relative, and knew they didn't succumb to just the flu. Many switched their party allegiance because they wanted to see strong action against COVID-19.

Back in November, *Time* magazine reported that some observers had wondered whether "Trump might follow through on his pre-election musings and try to get rid of prominent government scientists such as Dr. Anthony Fauci and Dr. Deborah Birx whose reality-based pandemic assessments have made him look bad."<sup>1</sup>

### **Fake News**

Some put out a false story that an underground paedophile ring run by men who were in positions of power was in place. A pro Trump group called Qanon argued we have to get those poor suffering children released from their imprisonment, and the only person who can do that is Trump. The problem was, as time rolled on and there was no release of children, it appeared that Trump was incapable of releasing the children, or he just didn't care too much. He should have told his supporters to stop spreading fake news, but he didn't. Some in the fake news group reasoned that if news of children suffering at the hands of paedophiles was good for the support of Trump, then why not have a more extreme story for even stronger support. Motivated by this reasoning, they came up with the story that children were being kept in secret tunnels where they were being tortured to obtain valuable hormones. The claim being that the hormone was only produced under great suffering.

When Trump left office, the lies regarding children stopped; no thanks to Trump. The lies simply weren't needed any more.

### **The Election**

Trump faced an uphill battle because the economy was struggling and the corona virus was taking a strong hold on the population as a consequence of insufficient government action. Polling showed a win for the Democrats. Trump declared himself the winner before counting got under way. He had previously confessed that he does not like losing. He lost.

Many Republicans echo the claim made by Trump that he is the real winner because there was corruption in the counting process. However, at some polling booths, Trump supporters harassed Democrat voters who were easily recognised by their wearing a mask. Trump supporters typically didn't believe there was a need to wear a mask, based on false information promoted in part by Trump himself that the novel corona virus was just another flu, and not to be taken seriously. Some Democrats reported that their mask was ripped from their face. In anticipation of harassment, many Democrats simply avoided the polling booths and cast a postal vote instead. When postal votes were being counted, some areas showed a strong preference for Biden over Trump.

When Trump 'discovered' the strong postal preference for Biden, he mounted a legal challenge to stop the counting. However, all of his legal challenges failed. At one point, he threatened to sack his legal team if they didn't find evidence of fraud. In spite of their best efforts, no evidence of fraud

was found. I will point out that a story written by a disgruntled person, and posted to the Internet is not the same as solid evidence.

Trump can't sensibly deny that he tried to stop the counting when it wasn't going in his favour. A legal paper trail goes back to his office.

Evidence that the business community has confidence in the Biden administration can be seen from the fact that on news that Biden won the election, the stock exchange rose in value in the US and here in Australia. It rose again when he was sworn into office. This fact does not sit well with the false claims that Trump won the election.

A further blow to Trump's claim that he won the election comes in the form of a recount in California. The recount cost the state \$300 million with no benefit to the Republican Party.<sup>2</sup>

### **Several senators ditch Trump and the party**

A sign of a lack of respect for Donald Trump felt by many within the Republican Party, can be seen in the fact that up until the 12 January 2021, **thirteen senators** have quit the Republican Party, including three inner cabinet.

On Thursday 14 January, a vote was passed (for the second time) in favour of impeaching Donald Trump. Ten Republicans had joined with the Democrats in the vote to impeach. One of those Republicans was **Adam Kinzinger** who reported that his Christian faith led him to impeach Trump. Out of the chaos, he wants to see *a commitment to truth* reorient his party.<sup>3</sup> The Republican Party is now severely wounded because Trump spent a lot of time promoting Trump, and not the Republican Party.

The actions of Trump have led a prominent Christian magazine to make unfavourable comments about him. "He is, by his own account, "very greedy" and "always" has been. He boasts of sexually assaulting women. He is repeatedly, publicly unfaithful to his wives"<sup>4</sup>

### **The high cost of telling lies**

It was alleged that vote processing machines were used to manipulate vote counting results away from Trump, with the result that he lost the election. The company behind the vote counting machines is "Smartmatic". *Fox News* is one of the main media companies which was loudly proclaiming the story that the election was being secretly rigged. Lou Dobbs of "*Lou Dobbs Tonight*" was one of several media presenters who pushed the false report of the election results being manipulated. *The New York Times* reports that his show, "... had become so packed with falsehoods about Mr. Trump's defeat that Fox Business was forced to run a fact-checking segment debunking some of its own anchor's assertions."<sup>5</sup> Eventually, Lou Dobbs show was cancelled by *Fox Business*.

Smartmatic has not taken the bruising they have received from Fox News and others lying down. On 04 February 2021, Smartmatic initiated a lawsuit against Fox News Network LCC seeking damages of **\$2.7 billion**, plus an additional amount for related issues. The complaint was filed in New York State Court in Manhattan

The 'Smartmatic' machines were only used in one county in one state, so even if it was changing votes (which it wasn't) it could not have changed the outcome of the election. A media release on the Smartmatic website makes the following points:

- In November and December 2020, Fox News broadcast multiple reports stating and implying that Smartmatic had fixed and rigged the 2020 election. They repeated the false claims and accusations on air and in articles and social media postings that were together seen by millions in the US and even more around the world.
- "One of the biggest challenges in the Information Age is disinformation, ... Fox is responsible for this disinformation campaign, which has damaged democracy worldwide and irreparably harmed Smartmatic and other stakeholders who contribute to modern elections." (Antonio Mugica, CEO of Smartmatic).
- Smartmatic's attorney states, "Fox News engaged in a conspiracy to spread disinformation about Smartmatic. They lied, and they did so knowingly and intentionally. Smartmatic seeks to hold them accountable for those lies," (J. Erik Connolly, Vice Chair of the Litigation Practice Group, at Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff, LLP.)

The above points are from the *Smartmatic* website, for those who want to delve further, go to:

<https://www.smartmatic.com/media/>

Lets hope that a commitment to the truth by men such as Adam Kinzinger, and the determination to punish lies and deception by the likes of the Smartmatic legal team, will put US politics on a higher level so as to leave an example for other nations to follow.

### **Get the right leader and all problems are solved?**

Many Trump supporters feel like the world has come to an end because they have not got their man across the line. There is a lesson from Scripture which shows that simply having the right person in leadership will not solve all problems. A bad law was allowed under the leadership of a good righteous and highly respected man. That man was Moses. The law he allowed was divorce.

Jesus reveals the reason why Moses allowed divorce, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so." (Matthew 19:8, ESV).

The above shows the importance of the ordinary Christian arming himself with good information and reaching out to the community. "Let your light shine before men, ..." (Matt. 5:15-16). Good leadership will help, but it is not enough.

### **End Notes**

1. *Time*, 23 Nov. 2020, p. 13.
2. *Time*, 27 September 2021, p. 11.
3. Kate Shellnutt, *Christianity Today*, 29 January 2021, p. 1.
4. *Christianity Today*, 21 December 20.
5. *The New York Times*, 05 February 2021.

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