

## A CALL FOR PRAGMATISM

Diversity is a major underlying condition of American life. The enduring challenge to American leadership is to bring unity out of this diversity, not conformity or uniformity, but a sense of cohesiveness that gives us national direction and purpose.

Prior to 1964, there were observers and students of the American political scene who argued for clear philosophical divisions between political parties, for a party symmetry and neat lines of political demarcation. The voters, it was said, deserved a clear choice, liberalism versus conservatism, and not two major parties that offered both, as well as all shades of political thinking in between.

These views are little heard of late. We have learned a subtler lesson—that sharp political lines can help to produce deep national divisions, that zealous ideological purity generates irreconcilable factional rivalries. America today has a surfeit of division and rivalry. Instead, we need leadership that can compose our differences maturely, leadership that solves problems and get things done. We need the progress that comes from pragmatism.

There is no profit in forcing our politics into rigid patterns imposed from right or left. There is no point in our conducting paralyzing ideological debates.

We must face each problem with a solution that meets this ultimate test: Does it work? Then let's find a way to do it. If it doesn't work, then all the passionate, ideological rhetoric we unleash will not make it work. Our goal must be to find workable solutions — not merely to defend philosophical positions.

As a case in point, there is little value in debating the priority of order over progress in our riot-torn or riot-prone cities. It must be only too evident that urban disorders thrive in wretched urban conditions. Obviously, unless we make substantial progress in improving these root conditions, we are going to find ourselves perpetually papering over serious urban failings with a thin, easily torn fabric of "public order." Yes, we must put down disorder swiftly and firmly. But let's get at the roots of social upheaval. This is the pragmatic approach we applied in creating an Urban Development Corporation in New York State this year. This corporation has the potential and

the objective of drawing \$5 billion worth of private capital to the priority task of transforming riot-breeding slums into decent communities. This is the only way to lasting public order—through measurable human progress.

Progress through pragmatism in government means simply taking the measure of a problem, devising a solution on a scale matching the dimensions of the problem and then going to the people or their representatives to win a mandate for putting the solution to work.

Water pollution offers another case, a problem ubiquitously decried, but inconclusively attacked, in most places. In New York, we measured the total need — \$1 billion in State aid to build the sewage treatment systems necessary to end water pollution in the State. We then took to the cities, towns and villages in an intensive campaign to educate the public to the problem, the solution proposed, the price if we acted, and the higher price of inaction. The result: a sweeping victory for a billion-dollar Pure Waters Bond Issue.

Another hallmark of pragmatic leadership is relevance. Our policies must be shaped to the problem as it exists today, and as it can be envisioned in the foreseeable future. Pragmatism requires of us that we recognize change and deal with it intelligently so that we master the force of change before it masters us.

One final pragmatic test for our party: Republicans must know their political arithmetic. We must accept the realities of party registration — the fact that the Republican Party is a minority party and not even number two but actually number three, trailing both the Democrats and the Independents. We must know what this means in terms of acquiring the breadth of voter appeal essential to Republican victory. Americans of whatever economic station, color, profession, whether rural, suburban, or city dwellers must see in the Republican party a banner they can follow towards the fulfillment of their aspirations.

Particularly in this time when division and self-doubt plague us, we as Republicans must hold forth leadership that can pull the Nation together, gather in the scattered and embittered factions of American life and get the country back on course.

(Richard M. Nixon contributed a guest editorial to our May issue.)