

by *Malcolm_Berko*

Dear Mr. Berko: Because a lot of people follow your advice I feel that you should share your political philosophy with us. Are you a Republican, a Democrat or an independent - and why? Whom do you support for president and why do you support that person? What do you like about President Bush or what do you dislike about him? What do you think about Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney and what do you think about the Democratic front-runners Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama? Which of those current leaders do you think would be best for the stock market and why? I believe that your opinions on the politics of our country would help me understand your thinking. The new president may have the opportunity to nominate at least two members to the Supreme Court so it's even more important to many of us to vote for the right party and right person. Many of us have benefited from your financial advice and many of us would also like to benefit from your political advice. Our paper has been publishing your column for over 25 years and in all that time we've never read anything about your political thoughts. Isn't it about time you shared them with us?

One of Your Readers

Fort Walton Beach, FLa.

Dear Reader: Every day, during the past several months, there are a minimum of five letters in my mail box requesting my personal comments on those who are campaigning for their party's presidential nomination. I've been writing this column for 30 years and while economic events are affected by politics (and vice versa), I have never commented on a party or candidate. But yesterday you could have knocked me over with a fender - 57 readers asked me to cast asparagus on various candidates believing that my comments would be a panacea to what ails the Dow. I have no political philosophy nor do I favor any presidential candidate.

First you must know that my definition of politics is parsed into two words: "Poli(y)" is a Latin word meaning "many" and "tics" are bloodsucking parasites. Put the two together and you got a lot of bloodsucking parasites! After voting in every election of the past 48 years and hearing the same shuck and mush (reduce government spending, better schools, smaller government, get tough on drugs, campaign finance reform, reduce welfare, lower taxes and tax reform, etc.), I'm reminded of the Roman philosopher Repetitious and his definition of stupidity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." So next year I've decided that I won't be stupid again.

I realize that a great many Americans view the elections process as off-putting, circus-like, demeaning, infantile and downright insulting. A circus, like a hot pillow joint, is a perfect metaphor for political conventions. They commence with tawdry twinkle of the hurdy-gurdy and monkeys on chains ... the trumpeting fanfare of a lurid Fellini movie, the clowns, the freaks, the trapeze artists ... all holding hands in the scrum, dancing and capering across the convention floor like hippies on Quaaludes.

These revelers surreptitiously sip whiskey from hip flasks; genuflect into shrill conga lines, pumping their "Vote for" placards upward in a bizarre dance to be recognized above the din. Too many Americans are profoundly disappointed because politicians openly pander to large contributors, special interest groups and after decades of in-your-face sleaze, graft, sex junkets, gifts, personal favors from lobbyists we have become contemptuous of our ruttish and larcenous representative. We have the best politicians that money can buy and we are the only nation whose elected officials are jailed for taking bribes. I've heard it said that "politicians are not born; they are poured from the contents of a colostomy bag."

Our president and representatives are not elected because we stand in line at the polling booth like trained seals to cast a vote. No, they are elected by terribly expensive Madison Avenue marketing and PR firms that are paid to organize the voters and who shape their opinions for whom to vote. It's Big Business, special interest groups and the wealthy that pour billions in the political coffers every four years. Ordinary people like us don't attend \$10,000 a-plate dinners or write \$50,000 checks to their favorite political party.

These influential contributors don't give that kind of money from the goodness of their hearts. So when their candidate is elected you better believe that he/she is expected to deliver. And it doesn't make a tinker's dam worth of difference which party controls Congress or the White House because those in power represent less than one-half of one percent of the citizenry. The remaining 99.5 percent of us are the peons, drones, pawns and peasants, the necessary detritus who work for a living, reproduce, pay taxes and for whom Congress doesn't give a tinker's damn.

Sorry my friend, you're on your own. But I think the following quote from Harry Truman is worth repeating: "My choice early in life was either to be a piano player in a whore house or a politician. And to tell the truth, there's hardly any difference."

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Taking Stock: Political Silence 101 by Malcolm_Berko