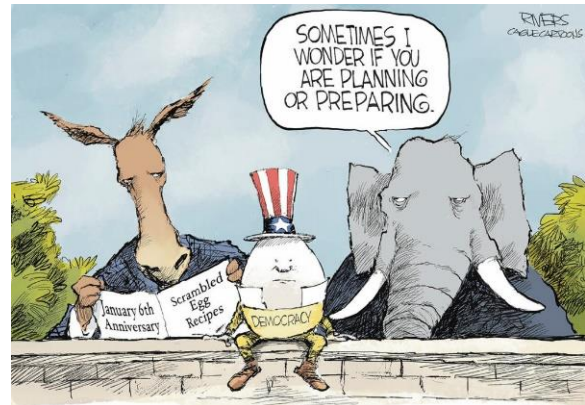


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January 6, 2021: terrible end to a dreadful year

Steve Bakke  **April 8, 2022**



All that's been going on in Ukraine and with the Supreme Court nomination hearings has relegated the January 6 (J6) investigation to being little more than background noise. It's time to direct attention to the aftermath of that unfortunate day. First, let's recall some of what led up to that day.

Trump came onto the scene in 2015 as a nouveau populist presidential candidate – rude, crude, disagreeable, and too often outrageous. He appealed to Americans who believed our government wasn't listening to them. He became president because he talked about popular ideas, and support for him grew as he delivered on many of his promises.

Supporters of Trump grew in number, but so did detractors, many becoming bitter enemies. His conservative policies often got tangled up with his controversial style, causing a myriad of negative characterizations and accusations – some false, some speculative, and others well deserved. Uncertain supporters still struggle with deciding whether he was a breath of fresh air, or a puff of bad breath.

The year prior to Biden's inauguration demonstrates the chaos and controversy Trump consistently attracted, including: the fraudulent Steele Dossier and related Russian collusion scam, pandemic related controversies, two unsuccessful impeachment trials, George Floyd dying at the hands of the police, months of street violence, radical movements to defund police departments, and a divisive and controversial presidential election. Finally, the chaos of January 6 arrived.

The mostly peaceful demonstrations of outrage following George Floyd's death were soon hijacked by thugs and anarchists. Burning, looting, and destruction lasted months with little resistance from far too many intimidated governors and mayors. Sadly, the biggest losers were minority businesses and homeowners. The Biden campaign was virtually silent about these events, except for Kamala Harris who enthusiastically provided financial support to arrested rioters.

Understanding what happened and how, is essential to prevent repeating mistakes. Our 16th president offered insight. In his “Lyceum Address” Lincoln’s message was that mobs beget mobs, and violence is dangerously contagious. The country’s mood eventually led to unrest and conflict from radicals of both political extremes.

The 2020 summer riots lasted 7 months, approximately two dozen were killed, over 150 federal properties were damaged or destroyed. State and local properties were destroyed, along with thousands of small businesses and homes. Property damage was in the billions of dollars.

J6 lasted a few hours, damage to the Capitol was limited, and the only direct casualties were Trump supporters - one shot by a panicked Capitol policeman, the other was crushed under a pile of demonstrators. Guns were not an issue as only one was confiscated from the demonstrators. The symbolism of the event is important however, and it significantly magnifies the importance of those few hours.

Several hundred Trump supporters were involved in the Capitol break-in. Virtually all other supporters immediately, and consistently thereafter, condemned the event. Trump’s actions at the rally that day were reckless, but I’m betting even he was shaken by what happened. He reacted slowly, the result was disastrous, and he’s paying a high price.

“Mobs beget mobs.” Selective outrage is dangerously contagious. A few hundred radical Trump supporters were swept up in a destructive cycle encouraged by the virtually unopposed summer riots, culminating in the reckless actions of January 6, 2020.

America guarantees swift justice, yet hundreds of alleged J6 participants remain jailed under squalid conditions with no trial date set. The chairman of the House Homeland Security Committee proposed putting one Trump supporting Senator on the “no fly” list.

Some democrats have suggested retributions against all who supported Trump. Some organizations want to taint all 75 million Trump voters. I’m reminded of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s “Scarlet Letter.” Imagine Trump supporters being required to wear a scarlet “T.” Public shaming is happening.

We’re now in the formative stage for proceedings in the House investigative hearings. Controversial issues abound, starting with the selection of only two republicans for the committee. And those two are devoted Trump haters.

Where will this end? Suppression of freedom and liberty would be the worst possible result. Watch for political wildfire by the time the summer and fall campaign season hits full speed.

I’m looking forward to assessing the House Select Committee proceedings – coming soon.