

"You have to elect a president before you can know what's in him"

Neither Aunt Nancy Pelosi nor Uncle Chuck Schumer said it in so many words, but no one can deny that electing a chief executive of the USA is a bit of a crap shoot. The risk of entrusting the country to an inexperienced man or woman cannot be minimized. Novices need not apply. Running a country is not the same as running a business, and Donald Trump has found that out over the past two years. Size and complexity matter, and government is definitely huge and nuanced. That's why we desperately needed a good manager and why we chose one in November of 2016. We couldn't have survived four or eight more years of being adrift in a sea of platitudes with a Ouija Board for guidance and a rank amateur as captain. Trump is no Obama, thankfully. He is every man with strengths and weaknesses. The warts are there for all to see.

He is the tech sector's personification of WYSIWYG (what you see is what you get). Don't like what you see? Try to get by. We did, under Obama, but unlike you we didn't go off the deep end and end up in psychosisville muttering to ourselves. We conservatives knew that the long nightmare would be over someday and that we had to subordinate our anger, husband our resources and not blow them all on one skirmish. Without a long track record to judge, the country 'elected a President (Obama) before we could know what was in him.' Like an onion being peeled he showed us, painfully, gradually, where his loyalties and sympathies lay. Right off the bat he jumped to conclusions about the Cambridge (MA) police having racist tendencies. Then he gave away the GM store and pushed a half billion dollars into a failing solar company, Solyndra, during our economic 'reconstruction.' He presided over great historic programs like "Cash for Clunkers" and drew a vanishing red line in the sand while he led from behind. What a man. The founding fathers would have been astounded.

The coup de grace was his signature legislation, Obamacare, or the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, a law that Aunt Nancy said was good for all Americans, never mind there was no real debate over it AND that it didn't deliver on the President's promises to lower our insurance premiums and allow us to keep our own doctors. That's America for you, a place where we can elect a pig in a poke and not worry if the 'pig' is up to the job until he steps in it and asks us to wash his hooves for him. Truth is, our need for strong leadership has made us suspend *caveat emptor* in our election vetting process. We want to be led by somebody who can charm us. Charm has replaced ability in the political arena. Already the Democrat field of would-be presidents is large and growing by the week. It is comprised of left of Left folks like Elizabeth Warren, opportunists like Kamala Harris and Kirsten Gillibrand and new entries like Julian Castro. All of them should definitely be worried about the others. While the wheels are not expected to publicly come off the Democratic wagon any time soon, the candidates should be on the lookout for behind-the-scenes maneuvers akin to the Hillary vs. Bernie conflict that ended badly for cousin Bernie.

Regardless of any internecine skirmishes that could serve to narrow the Democrats' field on the way to the primaries, we can be assured of one thing; the Dems will know what they're getting the rest of us into long before their candidate becomes a serious contender for President. It's what they do best: keep things under wraps, distract our attention and run out the clock until it's too late to ask, "who is this person anyway and why is he or she taking the oath of office?" Donald Trump is a known commodity. People either like him or despise him, but he is well-known to us. Argue if you will about his style. Call his rhetoric into question, but do not pretend that you didn't know who he was long before you voted for him (or against him).

Let us hope that the Democrats do all of us a favor by not choosing a lightweight to fight in the heavyweight class. The match is too important to be worrying about whether the winner will actually make the rest of us, losers.

Stephan Helgesen is a former career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in thirty different countries, specializing in export promotion. He is now a political analyst and strategist and author of over 900 articles and nine books on politics, the economy and social trends. He can be reached at: stephan@stephanhelgesen.com