

POTUS

"Finding the Challenges" is an original column appearing sporadically, by Verbal Vol.

I have come upon a new usage for the term POTUS. Actually, it is an old usage. It refers to the position but not directly to the incumbent. This works in the same way as does the juxtaposing of tyrant and tyranny. Is there a difference between the Emperor of Rome, Caesar, Nero, or Caligula?

There is nothing going on in the current administration that was not predicted in the bold words of H. L. Mencken, when he wrote:

As democracy is perfected, the office represents, more and more closely, the inner soul of the people. We move toward a lofty ideal. On some great and glorious day the plain folks of the land will reach their heart's desire at last, and the White House will be adorned by a downright moron.

I would argue that we are several innings past opening day in this ballpark. I don't know a useful president in my lifetime, from FDR's last, partial term, to, it is to be desired, DJT's first and last term — and I plan on living several more years, maybe two decades more, maintaining that ignorance.

So when you read POTUS from my pen, it will be in observation of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the USA's little royal ruler of England replica. I could also, more artfully, refer to Humpty Dumpty.

Firstly, King George III of England, the American Colonies' Lord and Master, became, it is told, nuttier than a fruitcake, to speak irreverently. There is a great deal of wiggle room in the tale of his madness regarding the cause and the inception. But he had to be crazy to think that a 3000-mile remote control would work over people who were English by birth. Just provisioning a military occupancy that far away (unlike India and Africa, there was not an abundance of cash-industries or readily tapped natural resources in America). One must wonder why minds like Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Thomas Jefferson did not see this pitfall, when playing make believe with America's future as a state. Well, I don't think they thought much about it. When the Declaration was written (mainly by the three gentlemen above) there were no concerns about the form of government, at least compared with the enormity of ditching a European monarchy.

So what did the drafting committee of the Constitution seize upon as a model, more than a dozen years later? Like pre-teen boys huddled in a tree house, this set of founders(?) probably considered all kinds of Huck Finn/Tom Sawyer blood oaths, but finally selected a model as close to British monarchy as they could devise. Most of the colonies had already transplanted whole something very similar to whatever was in favor in their section of England at the time of their charter migrants' having left the mother shore.

So, when I say POTUS, I really mean to say KOTUS — King of the United States of America. Our system started as a monarchy and has made no strides since then. Worse, it seems that almost every royal court has in it a secret conniver, such as Alexander Hamilton, Henry Kissinger, or Steve Bannon, or the master POTUS/conniver in one, FDR.

What is the purpose of this linguistic dipsy-doodle, you may reasonably ask. It is to focus on the tyranny NOT the tyrant. Tyrants can be unseated on most good days, but the hard part is keeping him or her from being replaced by another tyrant. If the systematic, structural tyranny is not disturbed, what hope is there to not replicate it.

Mencken seems to write that it is the office of president and the method of choosing that results in poor consequences. He can say that again!

I'm here to tell you that no matter who tickles your fancy for the next POTUS, it will be in error. And for the fools who championed anybody in the recent race, are you serious? The only possible satisfaction in selecting the winner of a POTUS race is that you might see your opposition get treated like mud, before you begin to be treated that way. The POTUS race is not for the appreciation of T. C. Mits.

But what is the practical effect of this screed? It is to emphasize that the wrong cure for the problem is repetitively installing new versions of the problem. George Washington is Problem 1.0, John Adams is Problem 1.1, Thomas Jefferson is Problem 1.2, ... , Barack Obama is Problem 1.43, and DJT is Problem 1.44. During Washington's Royal Incumbency, Problem 1.0.0 could have been Alexander Hamilton, while the lingo of Obama's reign, Problem 1.44.0 could be Eric Holder, the world's foremost punt-kicker.

Let us review just for a few moments the chock-full parade of POTUS-farts-in-the-spacesuit in just the first seven weeks of this version. Then we will call your attention to how it arose from beans eaten by previous occupants of the Oval (Offal/Awful Office).

Executive Orders — These are like Russian nesting dolls. We never reach the inner doll, nor finish adding outer dolls.

Dog-and-Pony Shows with High Profile Special Interests and Cultural Niches — Remember General Motors? Remember the coal and steel barons (multiple times). Remember the people (Ask not what your country can do for you?) Remember the coal

and steel unions? Remember the illegal immigrants (at least twice)? Remember the druggies? Remember the economically oppressed? Remember the gun owners? Remember “Don't ask, don't tell?” Remember education. Remember taxes, tariffs, and fees? Remember the hippies?

Good bye to my Juan

Goodbye Rosalita

Adios mis amigos Jesus, my Maria

You won't have a name

When you ride the big airplane

All they will call you

Will be “deportees”

from Deportees, or the Los Gatos Plane Crash, by Woody Guthrie

Wow The Groundlings with Fancy Footwork — All POTUS start off with bureaucratic fireworks, missiles and cannons in the Inauguration Parade. Look at FDR's alphabet soup agency-creation-fest to “end the Depression,” or Obama's appointment of a Transparency Csar (where is she today?)

Promise Them Anything — The current POTUS is not the first to grandstand at the expense of some far less powerful group. This is political theater as “straw man” (a straw man is a bogus argument that you should not lose, even if it is unrelated to the true problem).

Reliance on Very Short-term Memory Deficiencies — Smack everybody in the face with as much empty, ostentatious, exorbitant, meaningless pomp-and-circumstance as possible. Pomp-and-circumstance is always an effective action, until the morning after.

Start Kicking a Common Enemy in the Ribcage — Up until now, the media have always been ideal in this role. First of all, the citizenry don't know if the media are singular or plural, but nonetheless, out of control. Nobody likes bad news, such as “the jamoke you just elected is a drooling idiot, being played by all the crazies out there.” Furthermore, the media being made up of discrete, not-usually-interdependent sacks of mediocrity, has an impossible time putting together a coherent defense on a news cycle basis. Whereas politicians ordinarily have at least two years to work on their alibis.

FLOTUS Absorbs much of the Personal Attacks — The “First Lady” no matter how charming or scurrilous takes the lion's share of most of the catty remarks.

Staged Fight with Lawyers — Have a yelling match with a professional group that everyone hates. Try to do something that you know the legal system will not allow, particularly if it was one of the most populist undeliverables out there. It is especially good to lose to a segment of the court system that has pissed off your *populismos*, previously.

This can work out as a long term strategy as well. Keep doing things against the law until you can invoke Robin Hood and Jesse James. Also, try to make sure what you do will fail, but it is something that you have really sold, big-time, to your bases. There was once an elective insurance commissioner in North Carolina who in all cases disapproved rate increases. He knew he had no grounds to be upheld, but he became a martyr to the insurance purchasers of his state.

We Make Way Too Much of It — I found it so refreshing that I spent a dozen days or more in places like Ireland, New Zealand, Spain, Panama, and Austria, while never knowing who was the Grand Eminent Archon for any of those places. I still do not know.

We Argue about the Wrong Question — There's a debate trick called moving the fulcrum. A true argument balances between what is known and/or resolved, and what is yet to be known and/or resolved. The Question is mis-posed as whether we should have a state, whether we should have a POTUS, does POTUS have appropriate powers, is the selection method for POTUS effective, but WHO will be POTUS in a one-and-done, no-review, witch-trial-process that has no room for correction.

Now, if I insult you and your favorite POTUS, please understand that I am not taking a side against you. Also, quickly abandon any idea that I may soothe you confirmation bias.

Maybe Lysander Spooner hated the office of POTUS more than me, but you will have to prove it. I revere Thomas Jefferson as a man of the Age of Reason, but even he made a poor POTUS — there is that matter of the non-consultation regarding the Louisiana Purchase. I would have done exactly the same thing, but I cannot tell you from where the license came.