

Leadership is essential

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Contributing Writer

In a few days the people of Highland County will go to the polls to exercise their responsibility to choose who will lead them through the coming years. Obviously each voter desires to make a choice that results in leadership that is fair and equitable; that's visionary and able to transform visions into reality. The hope is to elect people who are dedicated to justice and who will guide us into a secure and protected future.

The American people as a whole and the citizens of Highland County, in particular, seem uneasy about the future and what they believe are basic flaws in the adequacy of American institutions. We like to believe that we live in a nation of just laws with a constitutional system that allows no group or individual tyranny and where the ballot box is the sword and the people its wielder. We know, however, that we live in a changing world where nothing is permanent and a world where people will resist change or urge change when the objectives are consistent with their chosen directions.

Even though Highland County is the smallest in population in Virginia and a small part of one of fifty large states, the need for responsible local leadership has never been greater. During the decade of the nineties and into the twenty-first century we will be faced with enormous problems of change. Americans everywhere generally feel overwhelmed by the huge number of difficulties facing them in

the future. Among the problems that immediately come to mind are those of air and water pollution, waste disposal, economic growth, education, health care and medical costs, AIDS, cancer, crime, homelessness, budget deficits, individual and corporate debt, state and federal mandates, oil imports, agriculture and even space exploration.

The new technologies will impact on institutions and processes all through our society and economy. Leaders on every level must make full use of the technological advances as a fundamental approach to the problems facing us. On the international level, mutual agreements between countries will be needed to solve the global problems that affect us all. On a national basis, our President and Congress must set and live up to standards of excellence. On a state and county basis, actions must be free from precipitancy, rashness, carelessness and negligence, and zero in on considerate remedies based on foresight. Local office holders must take careful aim to design their endeavors so as not to serve special interests, but serve the whole collective body of county citizens.

Traditionally, Americans are raised from childhood to

have confidence and pride in our country's leadership. The generation preceding us were remarkable in many ways; born in the last century, they went from candlelight to laser beams; from horse and buggy to space travel; and from folk medicine to heart transplants. During this time they also found time to fight two world wars and secure for us, their children, a future of freedom, prosperity and, thus far, safety.

They were perhaps the most successful generation in the history of mankind. Can we exceed that performance in a time when our problems seem to be outrunning our solutions?

I believe we can meet the formidable challenge of shaping the future. The collective decisions we make will determine whether life will be secure in the twenty-first century, or whether our children and theirs will be its tragic victims. At the ballot box we can begin, right here in little Highland County, the process toward a new age of leadership. Leadership that is essential, achievable, and worthwhile. Each of us must sort out the charismatic manipulators pursuing selfish power goals from the "real people" of exceptional visionary ability.



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