

6-BK

Brian Lamb - C-Span.

Tues. Jan. 23, 1996

Sir,

I was surprised to find the Booknotes interview of Michael Kinsley very interesting, because I have never watched "Crossfire" programs and I doubt if I've ever read any of his columns. But the theme of his book, that The People make mistakes at the ballot box or in their pluralistic expectations of the federal government, I can agree with. Especially if he also believes that the people over the past 200 years have generally done well.

The People have made the best selections of the Presidential candidates which were made available by caucuses, or smoked-filled rooms at conventions. I don't recall that Kinsley pays much attention to selections by party bosses or, after more than 20 years of selections by the People in primary elections, whether Kinsley would go back to smoked-filled rooms at conventions, if that is possible.

Your interview brought out emphasis on the use of esoteric words such as "zeitgeist" and "Schadenfreude." It reveals an ivory-tower attitude toward his readers. I heard those 2 words often in college, coming from ivory-tower professors. Another word they also used often was "Weltanschauung" which means "world outlook." I'm surprised Kinsley hasn't abused that word.

At the other extreme of word usage are the fad-words in Washington, D.C. Years ago they were called "Pentagonese" or "Bureaucratese". I don't know how they are described, but "lingo" and "jargon" are probably obsolete. I usually can keep up with such slang but there are 3 terms used by talking heads on TV from Washington ^{that I don't understand} D.C. One is "pushing the edge of the envelope". I can't understand where that comes from but it could be a computer term.

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The second word is "segway." after I heard that several times, I looked in my dictionary. It wasn't there but I did find "segue"; an odd musical term. Maybe Segway ~~not~~ means a transition in discussions from one topic to another. Segway does sound better than: "not to change the subject but let's talk about another topic," but I'll never use it.

The third word is "dewable". It has emerged often in the past year & may disappear in 1997. I think it means that "it can be done".

To show how fast these fad-words rise & fall is the example of "eye-ee" or i. e. in conversations. When I wrote a history thesis in college, it was customary to use "i. e." and "e. g." as abbreviations in footnotes. But its oral use by talking heads was another ivory-tower term that went on for only 2 years in the early 1990's. The 2 abbreviations stood for their original Latin words.

On other fad-words that I currently have become saturated with (and they may fade away soon) I submit the following composition:

"Let's put this in perspective. A level playing field is dewable and is the segway to smoke and mirrors. The jury is still out, clearly. Getting a level playing field is essential, as it has no glass ceiling, would provide more diversity which includes white males, and the new paradigm would have polycentric power centers and will gore new oxes, even though it is counter-productive. We need a pro-active campaign for this level playing field. The chicken comes before the egg."

Still, one size doesn't fit all, as we move the goal posts ~~of~~ on the playing field, using honest numbers. This will be archived for future science. We can cook the books and still have fiscal responsibility.

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On the level playing field there is no resolve of the racial divide so we must create a new environment with hope, growth and opportunity, and with stability of the value of the dollar. That is the litmus test.

The level playing field will un-wring the bell of affirmative action and narrow the credibility gap. That is the zero sum game of the bottom line. We will all be under the broad tent, where the baby is thrown out with the bathwater.

Strengthening the dialogue is essential to keep ships from passing each other in the night. We need to communicate more in order to get our message across. We need to get this behind us and move on.

On the level playing field, the glass is half full, and all factions open a can of worms. Having said that, each one's role is invaluable and the healing process will begin from Day One or the Gitgo. The ball is in the other court, painted with a broad brush and lighted by the light at the end of the tunnel, or even at the tip of the iceberg. When the rubber hits the road, we cannot solve the problems with Band-Aids but we can do the heavy lifting with real numbers.

Also, on the level playing field, we will go the extra mile to draw a line in the sand, while all boats will rise equally on the tide. This is the conventional wisdom, not ruling anything in or out. This represents a sea-change (or see-change) in changing apples to oranges, if you wish to take it out of context of the difference between perception and reality, clearly. The devil is in the details, especially those which drop off the radar screen. These are the parameters of the playing field.

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That the bottom line is a hyperbolism is crystal clear. It demagogues the issue with a lot of ~~real~~ rhetoric, after everyone is on board. This is a wake-up call to articulate the need, otherwise the people just don't get it. It is critical to put up the warning that the following report contains graphic footage for our children and grandchildren. The spin doctors are out in force with a pro-active interpretation of the guidelines with both style & substance. They will see to it that the dialogue doesn't attrit, the time is now and the rest is history. This way we can dispel partisan bickering because what goes around comes around.

The level playing field is a viable alternative to the slippery slope, (being cautiously optimistic), in the appropriate time-frame. In fact, the check is in the mail. To achieve the level field, we must also re-arrange the deck chairs on the Titanic. That's what it's all about. There may be some cost over-runs in the process, especially in the private sector. Still, if it isn't broken, don't fix it. The Cold War is over, that did cut deeply into the American psyche. Mistakes were made, although hindsight is 20/20. You know it, I know it and the people know it. The Founding Fathers know it, (-de ja vu, vis-a-vis and quid pro quo).

There is a window of opportunity onto the political landscape, where they grow the economy with 110% of their effort and keep all options open, exponentially. I'm absolutely & totally shocked and appalled. I know where you're coming from."

Sincerely,

Quincy 62301