

## Doonesbury Links Oct10 & 11

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New Hampshire Union Leader

Columns – September 28, 2004

Another View:

Why I will vote for John Kerry for President

By JOHN EISENHOWER

Guest Commentary

THE Presidential election to be held this coming Nov. 2 will be one of extraordinary importance to the future of our nation. The outcome will determine whether this country will continue on the same path it has followed for the last 3½ years or whether it will return to a set of core domestic and foreign policy values that have been at the heart of what has made this country great.

Now more than ever, we voters will have to make cool judgments, unencumbered by habits of the past. Experts tell us that we tend to vote as our parents did or as we "always have." We remained loyal to party labels. We cannot afford that luxury in the election of 2004. There are times when we must break with the past, and I believe this is one of them.

As son of a Republican President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, it is automatically expected by many that I am a Republican. For 50 years, through the election of 2000, I was. With the current administration's decision to invade Iraq unilaterally, however, I changed my voter registration to independent, and barring some utterly unforeseen development, I intend to vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate, Sen. John Kerry.

The fact is that today's "Republican" Party is one with which I am totally unfamiliar. To me, the word "Republican" has always been synonymous with the word "responsibility," which has meant limiting our governmental obligations to those we can afford in human and financial terms. Today's whopping budget deficit of some \$440 billion does not meet that criterion.

Responsibility used to be observed in foreign affairs. That has meant respect for others. America, though recognized as the leader of the community of nations, has always acted as a part of it, not as a maverick separate from that

community and at times insulting towards it. Leadership involves setting a direction and building consensus, not viewing other countries as practically devoid of significance. Recent developments indicate that the current Republican Party leadership has confused confident leadership with hubris and arrogance.

In the Middle East crisis of 1991, President George H.W. Bush marshaled world opinion through the United Nations before employing military force to free Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. Through negotiation he arranged for the action to be financed by all the industrialized nations, not just the United States. When Kuwait had been freed, President George H. W. Bush stayed within the United Nations mandate, aware of the dangers of occupying an entire nation.

Today many people are rightly concerned about our precious individual freedoms, our privacy, the basis of our democracy. Of course we must fight terrorism, but have we irresponsibly gone overboard in doing so? I wonder. In 1960, President Eisenhower told the Republican convention, "If ever we put any other value above (our) liberty, and above principle, we shall lose both." I would appreciate hearing such warnings from the Republican Party of today.

The Republican Party I used to know placed heavy emphasis on fiscal responsibility, which included balancing the budget whenever the state of the economy allowed it to do so. The Eisenhower administration accomplished that difficult task three times during its eight years in office. It did not attain that remarkable achievement by cutting taxes for the rich. Republicans disliked taxes, of course, but the party accepted them as a necessary means of keep the nation's financial structure sound.

The Republicans used to be deeply concerned for the middle class and small business. Today's Republican leadership, while not solely accountable for the loss of American jobs, encourages it with its tax code and heads us in the direction of a society of very rich and very poor.

Sen. Kerry, in whom I am willing to place my trust, has demonstrated that he is courageous, sober, competent, and concerned with fighting the dangers associated with the widening socio-economic gap in this country. I will vote for him enthusiastically.

I celebrate, along with other Americans, the diversity of opinion in this country. But let it be based on careful thought. I urge everyone, Republicans and Democrats alike, to avoid voting for a ticket merely because it carries the label of the party of one's parents or of our own ingrained habits

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John Eisenhower, son of President Dwight D. Eisenhower, served on the White House staff between October 1958 and the end of the Eisenhower administration. >From 1961 to 1964 he assisted his father in writing "*The White House Years*," his Presidential memoirs. He served as American ambassador to Belgium between 1969 and 1971. He is the author of nine books, largely on military subjects

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WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 2004  
WSJ reporter Fassihi's e-mail to friends

9/29/2004 2:58:10 PM

From: [Wall Street Journal reporter] Farnaz Fassihi  
Subject: From Baghdad

Being a foreign correspondent in Baghdad these days is like being under virtual house arrest. Forget about the reasons that lured me to this job: a chance to see the world, explore the exotic, meet new people in far away lands, discover their ways and tell stories that could make a difference.

Little by little, day-by-day, being based in Iraq has defied all those reasons. I am house bound. I leave when I have a very good reason to and a scheduled interview. I avoid going to people's homes and never walk in the streets. I can't go grocery shopping any more, can't eat in restaurants, can't strike a conversation with strangers, can't look for stories, can't drive in any thing but a full armored car, can't go to scenes of breaking news stories, can't be stuck in traffic, can't speak English outside, can't take a road trip, can't say I'm an American, can't linger at checkpoints, can't be curious about what people are saying, doing, feeling. And can't and can't. There has been one too many close calls, including a car bomb so near our house that it blew out all the windows. So now my most pressing concern every day is not to write a kick-ass story but to stay alive and make sure our Iraqi employees stay alive. In Baghdad I am a security personnel first, a reporter second.

It's hard to pinpoint when the 'turning point' exactly began. Was it April when the Fallujah fell out of the grasp of the Americans? Was it when Moqtada and Jish Mahdi declared war on the U.S. military? Was it when Sadr City, home to ten percent of Iraq's population, became a nightly battlefield for the Americans? Or was it when the insurgency began spreading from isolated pockets in the Sunni triangle to include most of Iraq? Despite President Bush's rosy assessments, Iraq remains a disaster. If under Saddam it was a 'potential' threat, under the Americans it has been transformed to 'imminent and active threat,' a foreign policy failure bound to haunt the United States for decades to come.

Iraqis like to call this mess 'the situation.' When asked 'how are thing?' they reply: 'the situation is very bad.'

What they mean by situation is this: the Iraqi government doesn't control most Iraqi cities, there are several car bombs going off each day around the country killing and injuring scores of innocent people, the country's roads are becoming impassable and littered by hundreds of landmines and explosive devices aimed to kill American soldiers, there are assassinations, kidnappings and beheadings. The situation, basically, means a raging barbaric guerilla war. In four days, 110 people died and over 300 got injured in Baghdad alone. The numbers are so shocking that the ministry of health — which was attempting an exercise of public transparency by releasing the numbers — has now stopped disclosing them.

Insurgents now attack Americans 87 times a day.

A friend drove thru the Shiite slum of Sadr City yesterday. He said young men were openly placing improvised explosive devices into the ground. They melt a shallow hole into the asphalt, dig the explosive, cover it with dirt and put an old tire or plastic can over it to signal to the locals this is booby-trapped. He said on the main roads of Sadr City, there were a dozen landmines per every ten yards. His car snaked and swirled to avoid driving over them. Behind the walls sits an angry Iraqi ready to detonate them as soon as an American convoy gets near. This is in Shiite land, the population that was supposed to love America for liberating Iraq.

For journalists the significant turning point came with the wave of abduction and kidnappings. Only two weeks ago we felt safe around Baghdad because foreigners were being abducted on the roads and highways between towns. Then came a frantic phone call from a journalist female friend at 11 p.m. telling me two Italian women had been abducted from their homes in broad daylight. Then the two Americans, who got beheaded this week and the Brit, were abducted from their homes in a residential neighborhood. They were supplying the entire block with round the clock electricity from their generator to win friends. The abductors grabbed one of them at 6 a.m. when he came out to switch on the generator; his beheaded body was thrown back near the neighborhoods./CONTINUED BELOW

WSJ reporter Fassahi's e-mail to friends /2  
9/29/2004 2:47:12 PM

The insurgency, we are told, is rampant with no signs of calming down. If anything, it is growing stronger, organized and more sophisticated every day. The various elements within it—baathists, criminals, nationalists and Al Qaeda—are cooperating and coordinating.

I went to an emergency meeting for foreign correspondents with the military and embassy to discuss the kidnappings. We were somberly told our fate would largely depend on where we were in the kidnapping chain once it was determined we were missing. Here is how it goes: criminal gangs grab you and sell you up to Baathists in Fallujah, who will in turn sell you to Al Qaeda. In turn, cash and weapons flow the other way from Al Qaeda to the Baathist to the criminals. My friend Georges, the French journalist snatched on the road to Najaf, has been missing for a month with no word on release or whether he is still alive.

America's last hope for a quick exit? The Iraqi police and National Guard units we are spending billions of dollars to train. The cops are being murdered by the dozens every day—over 700 to date — and the insurgents are infiltrating their ranks. The problem is so serious that the U.S. military has allocated \$6 million dollars to buy out 30,000 cops they just trained to get rid of them quietly.

As for reconstruction: firstly it's so unsafe for foreigners to operate that almost all projects have come to a halt. After two years, of the \$18

billion Congress appropriated for Iraq reconstruction only about \$1 billion or so has been spent and a chunk has now been reallocated for improving security, a sign of just how bad things are going here.

Oil dreams? Insurgents disrupt oil flow routinely as a result of sabotage and oil prices have hit record high of \$49 a barrel. Who did this war exactly benefit? Was it worth it? Are we safer because Saddam is holed up and Al Qaeda is running around in Iraq?

Iraqis say that thanks to America they got freedom in exchange for insecurity. Guess what? They say they'd take security over freedom any day, even if it means having a dictator ruler.

I heard an educated Iraqi say today that if Saddam Hussein were allowed to run for elections he would get the majority of the vote. This is truly sad.

Then I went to see an Iraqi scholar this week to talk to him about elections here. He has been trying to educate the public on the importance of voting. He said, "President Bush wanted to turn Iraq into a democracy that would be an example for the Middle East. Forget about democracy, forget about being a model for the region, we have to salvage Iraq before all is lost."

One could argue that Iraq is already lost beyond salvation. For those of us on the ground it's hard to imagine what if any thing could salvage it from its violent downward spiral. The genie of terrorism, chaos and mayhem has been unleashed onto this country as a result of American mistakes and it can't be put back into a bottle.

The Iraqi government is talking about having elections in three months while half of the country remains a 'no go zone'—out of the hands of the government and the Americans and out of reach of journalists. In the other half, the disenchanted population is too terrified to show up at polling stations. The Sunnis have already said they'd boycott elections, leaving the stage open for polarized government of Kurds and Shiites that will not be deemed as legitimate and will most certainly lead to civil war.

I asked a 28-year-old engineer if he and his family would participate in the Iraqi elections since it was the first time Iraqis could to some degree elect a leadership. His response summed it all: "Go and vote and risk being blown into pieces or followed by the insurgents and murdered for cooperating with the Americans? For what? To practice democracy? Are you joking?"

—Farnaz

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