

## **LUCKY GEORGE**

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It's good to be good. It's good to be lucky. It's very good to be good and lucky at the same time, at a premier moment in American history. And so begins the term of President George W. Bush.

Consider four political gifts:

(1) The economic slowdown. It's real and it's now. Bush used several rationales in campaigning for a solid tax cut. One is straight from *Ye Olde Conservative Playbook*. The tax cut is a tool to limit the growth of government. If the money never gets to Washington, it won't be spent by Washington. But there was a populist aspect, too: The surplus belongs to the people, not to government. Third, a Keynesian dollop: Bush pushed for a tax cut phased in over time as a long-term insurance policy against economic slowdown.

Democrats railed about "massive tax cuts for the rich." But now Bush is still for his tax cut, and Democrats are making soothing noises about tax cuts for Keynesian purposes. There will be new tax legislation -- soon.

In recent years, in trendy political circles, it's been *fey* to say that Americans aren't really interested in lower taxes. There's a reason for that: The public hasn't believed that they'd ever get them. They're going to get them.

(2) Energy crisis. As rolling blackouts sweep through California, Bush's supply-driven energy plan makes ever-greater sense. Perhaps this will be the lesson the public needs: You can't have electricity without generating it. President

Bush has some long-term ideas about that. Why not drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Reserve? Why not, indeed?

Because, say the environmentalists, it's pristine, and there are no people there. Hmm ... So where should we get energy? Drill in populated un-pristine areas, like Manhattan? Cambridge? Ann Arbor?

In eight years in office the Clinton-Gore administration -- torn between environmentalists and global warmists on the one side, and growing consumer demand on the other -- never seriously came to grips with the supply side of the energy equation. That is particularly so in the area of nuclear power.

We never did get a straight answer about whether the U.S. government approved or disapproved of nuclear development. Nuclear should be the fuel of choice for those concerned about global warming because it creates no greenhouse gases. But the environmental quasi-religious mystique says, "Nuclear bad." So here we are in California, with the lights out, offering Bush a golden opportunity to use the Golden State as a national lesson.

(3) Add to this the settlement made by former President Clinton and the independent counsel Robert Ray. The document Clinton signed says he knowingly made sworn statements that were false. Surprise! Clinton's attorney says the statement did not mean that the president lied.

Anyway, it's off President Bush's desk, and that's good. Of course, we have not heard the last of the most intelligent, most articulate president of the 20th century, the greatest living politician, nor have we heard the last about his noble works lifting America from the gloom of deep poverty to the sunlit uplands of prosperity. But hey, it's a big country.

(4) Finally, Jesse Jackson, who has been beating up Bush mercilessly. After personal embarrassment, Jackson announced that he would leave the agitprop business. Almost as quickly, he recanted, explaining that the country couldn't afford to lose him. That's OK, too. It's a very big country, big enough for Clinton and a somewhat diminished Reverend Jackson.

It is a big country, and a great country, with a unique mission. There has been an argument going on about America's role in the world in the forthcoming Bush era. Might America inch back from the advanced ramparts of liberty? In his inaugural address, Bush made it clear where he stood. Let us close with some excerpts:

"Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along. And even after nearly 225 years, we have a long way yet to travel. The enemies of liberty and our country should make no mistake: America remains engaged in the world by history and by choice, shaping a balance of power that favors freedom. We will defend our allies and our interests. We will show purpose without arrogance. We will meet aggression and bad faith with resolve and strength. And to all nations, we will speak for the values that gave our nation birth."

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