What Community Activists Should Do Now   January, 2017
John Buckstead and Jim Masters

We have had big shocks before –
1. Nixon in 1972 (defeating McGovern and Shriver).
2. Reagan in 1980 and 1984.
3. George Bush in 2000 and 2004.
4. Obama in 2008 (wanted to cut by 50% and have competition)

A. What's different now?
1. Then, we measured policy were along a liberal/conservative spectrum. Now, there is a nationalist approach for which we have few metrics.
2. Then, Social Security and Medicare were not in trouble. Now, Ryan Plan would alter them, Trump says they stay the same.
3. Then, did not have detailed plans like the Ryan Plan to reduce federal spending for human development, economic development, safety net, environmental protection. Now, some of the Ryan plan will happen during Reconciliation in April. Mega-block grant?
4. Then, Presidents liked at least some staff work, position papers, etc. Now, there will be a president who does not read much and who likes to decide most issues himself. This creates a "bandwidth" challenge in that there are only so many hours in a day. It seems likely that President Trump will focus initially on his signature issues, (1) allies paying more for their defense, (2) immigration management, deportations (3) screening of individuals especially Muslims for loyalty, (4) NAFTA (5) other trade issues especially with China, (6) crime. It is unclear what his other priorities might be.
5. Now, many of the proposed solutions seem implausible or have a difficult road to implementation, such as bringing back jobs in coal mining and steel, spending a trillion dollars on infrastructure when Congress has turned down that kind of spending since ARRA, etc.

C. What should Community Activists be doing now? **John Buckstead says**:
1. Bolster your boards. Find good people….
2. Get ready for infrastructure spending and making sure it dos not all go to the big corporations
3. How to think about the 2020 census and reapportionment . Unless a significant number of folks are willing (have the interest and the courage) to become politically active, nothing much will change. Why is this so? Because reapportionment and gerrymandering are a political process.

Following is a description of how it works and what the current situation looks like.

    a. Each State legislature decides its State's Congressional District boundaries.

    b. The boundaries are determined each ten years after the release of the decennial census. (The next one is 2020.)

    c. While the Districts must adhere to the one person one vote rule (districts have roughly equal population), the actual boundaries are determined by the Legislatures. Check out the Northern District in Ohio which runs from Cleveland to Toledo. You can Google and get some maps that illustrate the abuses.

    d. Over the past decade, roughly the time of the Obama administration, Republicans have gained literally thousands of local and State offices.

    e. By time the 2010 census figures were released, Republicans and conservatives had gained control of at least two-thirds of the State legislatures and the governorships.

    f. As a result of that control, they determined the Congressional boundaries, and therefore, the outcome of future elections for Congress.

    g. That's why, nationally, although more votes were cast for Democrats for Congress, Republicans have elected an overwhelming majority in Congress.

    h. Opponents to virtually every element of a progressive agenda are currently in control of the Supreme Court, the Presidency, U.S. Congress, most governorships and State Legislatures, and unless a change in the control of State legislatures and governorships shifts to the Democrats over the next 4-6 years, the situation is likely to get worse through the 2020s, probably until at least 2032.

    i. Many CAA employees are ideally qualified to serve in their State legislatures. More importantly, I think many of them have the attributes to become excellent candidates: they know their communities, they know the issues, they have an excellent network of likely supporters, and they understand something about community organizing. If they don't want to become candidates, they might identify others who would be willing to run. College and university professors are often helpful sources.

    j. For those CAA employees who are retiring or who are just tired of being constrained by CAA employment, running for public office might give new meaning to their lives. While the positions are not

usually high paying, they often have good retirement and health benefits after a relatively short period of time.

  k. I don't know if you can even have a discussion about this among folks who show up at CAP conferences. If you can find a group that is interested, perhaps it could be billed as a seminar for senior employees who are preparing for the next chapter of their lives. I do think that if you could get a group started, a good curriculum could be developed and perhaps it could turn into a "movement".

  l. If some folks are interested, I would be willing to help them. (JB)

D. What should community activists be doing now? **Jim Masters says**:

1. Learn your local economy. Analyze the decline of the middle-class jobs. Allen Stansbury and I are preparing worksheets to help you find these data.
2. Learn your regional economy. "Why tens of millions of people can no longer make a living." Why the American Dream is weakening.
3. Don't blame women. Our opinion is that most of the white females who voted for Trump are not racist or sexist, they are the breadwinners or wives of breadwinners worried about their family income. They are part of the shrinking middle class or white working class
4. Look for local and state opportunities for (a) earned income tax credits, minimum wage, child care, family leave, etc.
5. Build or strengthen your relationship with your members of Congress.
6. Be prepared for rapid adjustments as Federal funding for certain activities being reduced or eliminated.
7. Be prepared for increases in infrastructure spending.
8. Be prepared to be a "work site" for people who have new work requirements to retain eligibility for benefits (SNAP, WIA, Medicaid? Drug rehab?)
9. Talk about the 7 trillion dollars corporations have in the bank – they should use some of it for increases in employee compensation.
10. Go through the Ryan Plan with a fine-toothed comb and see if you can find areas of mutual interest. (criminal justice reform?)

https://abetterway.speaker.gov/_assets/pdf/ABetterWay-Poverty-PolicyPaper.pdf

11. Help people get registered to vote. Work against efforts to reduce voter participation. See the Center for American Progress report on the challenges and what to do about them at: https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/democracy/reports/2016/11/11/292322/voter-suppression-laws-cost-americans-their-voices-at-the-polls/
12. Be clear about the causes of white dissatisfaction. Two of those issues are: not finding a unifying theme that appealed to all Americans. And job

loss. We did not have enough weight on unifying themes, policies that will benefit all of us. The focus on identity politics appealing to sub groups instead of focusing on the big "us" of all Americans.   Trump stole the spotlight on this issue. Identity politics had its limits. Here is an good article on the "fixation on diversity" and specific appeals to sub groups.

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/20/opinion/sunday/the-end-of-identity-liberalism.html

Most importantly, Trump voters were expressing anger and disappointment about wage stagnation and the decline in job opportunities.

13. Globalization and technology. Trump promises to restore jobs in coal, steel, manufacturing but it is unclear how that can happen.   (IMHO = impossible.)

"It Happened Here – Obama Reckons With a Trump Presidency" In this article in the New Yorker, reporter David Remnick describes several conversations with Obama. Trump had won big in rural America by appealing to a ferment of anti-urban, anti-coastal feeling. And yet Obama dismissed the notion that the Republicans had captured the issue of inequality. Here is one excerpt. The article says:

"The Republicans don't care about that issue," he (Obama) said. "There's no pretense that anything that they're putting forward, any congressional proposals that are going to come forward, will reduce inequality. . . . What I do concern myself with, and the Democratic Party is going to have to concern itself with, is the fact that the confluence of globalization and technology is making the gap between rich and poor, the mismatch in power between capital and labor, greater all the time. And that's true globally."

Redefine the social compact. In the same article, Obama continued:

> "The prescription that some offer, which is stop trade, reduce global integration, I don't think is going to work," he went on. "If that's not going to work, then we're going to have to redesign the social compact in some fairly fundamental ways over the next twenty years. **And I know how to build a bridge to that new social compact**. It begins with all the things we've talked about in the past—early-childhood education, continuous learning, job training, a basic social safety net, expanding the earned-income tax credit, investments in infrastructure— which, by definition, aren't shipped overseas. All of those things

accelerate growth, give you more of a runway. But at some point, when the problem is not just Uber but driverless Uber, when radiologists are losing their jobs to A.I., (artificial intelligence) then we're going to have to figure out how do we maintain a cohesive society and a cohesive democracy in which productivity and wealth generation are not automatically linked to how many hours you put in, where the links between production and distribution are broken, in some sense. Because I can sit in my office, do a bunch of stuff, send it out over the Internet, and suddenly I just made a couple of million bucks, and the person who's looking after my kid while I'm doing that has no leverage to get paid more than ten bucks an hour."

The sense that, on the level of politics and policy, there was work to be done ("I know how to build a bridge to that new social compact") infused the post-Presidential role that he sketched for himself. (end of excerpt) http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/28/obama-reckons-with-a-trump-presidency

14. DISCUSSION: Obama states that "…globalization and technology is making the gap between rich and poor, the mismatch in power between capital and labor greater all the time. And that's true globally." Yes the drivers are globalization and technology and they are MAKING THE GAP HAPPEN between the rich and the poor and the mismatch in power between capital and labor. The biggest drivers of inequality are globalization and technology. Add in the widening gap between college graduates and non-college graduates, and the movement of women into the workforce and you have about 90% of the description of how rural white high-school grads are losing ground. And are angry about it. And want to – here it comes – make America great again.

Here is how Steve Bannon describes it in a November 18, 2016 interview in the Hollywood News. The article begins: He absolutely — mockingly — rejects the idea that this is a racial line. "I'm not a white nationalist, I'm a nationalist. I'm an economic nationalist," he tells me. "The globalists gutted the American working class and created a middle class in Asia. The issue now is about Americans looking to not get f—ed over. If we deliver" — by "we" he means the Trump White House — "we'll get 60 percent of the white vote, and 40 percent of the black and Hispanic vote and

we'll govern for 50 years. That's what the Democrats missed. They were talking to these people with companies with a $9 billion market cap employing nine people. It's not reality. They lost sight of what the world is about." http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/steve-bannon-trump-tower-interview-trumps-strategist-plots-new-political-movement-948747

15. One role for community action is to help redefine the social compact to expand the definitions of what constitutes work for which people receive public benefits. Put another way, I think there will be new requirements attached to Medicaid, SNAP, Section 8, and anything-else-that-moves (EITC? Child Care? Veterans? Drug rehab?) that the receipt of benefits is conditional upon the person doing work – of some kind, in some place, for some purpose. The big pretext will be that this work is also helping them prepare for jobs in the private sector, which has been a myth for 30 years. Unfortunately, this myth rolls off the lips of people who work in community action as easily as it does of people who work in employment and training.

The reality is that there have not been enough good jobs in the private and public sectors for the people who want to work for decades and there is nothing on the horizon to suggest there ever will be again. But if we can help expand the definitions of what constitutes socially useful work for which people can receive publicly funded benefits or universal basic income and if CAA's can provide places for people to explore and create that work….that would be a good thing.

ARRA provided lessons learned about large scale public works
http://economicmobilitycorp.org/uploads/stimulating-opportunity-full-report.pdf

Upjohn has good background info.
http://research.upjohn.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1128&context=up_bookchapters

MDRC has some studies. http://www.mdrc.org

Public service employment works in other countries:
        http://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2000/10/art4full.pdf

Or, maybe CNCS will absorb all these folks.   http://www.nationalservice.gov

Jim Masters, CCAP, NCRT   e-mail me at: jmasters@cencomfut.com