

ture—and the leaders—whose deeds change the world. With statistical, historical, and psychological data, and a method defined as historiometrics, he looks for laws about history and its most prominent achievers.

Simonton discusses a variety of topics: the impact of ancestry and environment on achievers, the relationship of personality to accomplishment, how education contributes to genius, the influence of the times, and, strangely enough, political violence. A vast amount of statistical data has gone into this effort.

Simonton asserts that historiometrics, when fully developed as a discipline, will enable us to predict greatness, establish criteria for leadership performance, and understand what characteristics make for good or bad leaders. Yet there is little in this book that any informed reader will not already know. The author's love of what he calls the laws of historiometrics obscures his realization of their limitations. His claims would have more validity if we lived in a world of consistencies. Since we do not, there is little nomothetic yield in this work.

The alarming recent decline in quality of those who aspire to public office can only be reversed by giving wider attention to the problems of leadership. Though none of these books succeeds in positing any new laws or imperatives, they do fulfill one of the responsibilities of the academic community: to enlarge the discussion in every possible way. [WV]

**A DIFFERENT KIND OF
PRESIDENCY:
A PROPOSAL FOR BREAKING
THE POLITICAL DEADLOCK**
by Theodore Sorensen
(Harper & Row; 134 pp.; \$11.95)

Larry Tool

Twenty-three years ago Theodore Sorensen wrote an audacious inaugural for John Kennedy that pledged America to "pay any price and bear any burden...to assure the survival and success of liberty." How does Mr. Sorensen feel today about America's burdens and prospects? We have at best five years, he now warns, to halt the arms race, master the deficit, restore the economy, restructure Third World debt, restore a favorable balance of trade, and overhaul our relations with Mexico. For America "time is running out."

This slim volume assumes we live on the brink of catastrophe. Sorensen attributes our inability to pull back from this brink to a

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weak and ineffective presidency and sees our only hope as a strong and effective one. But this former chief counsel and celebrator of Camelot is not scanning the political horizon for a new Hotspur—willful, partisan, and confident. Instead, Sorensen wants to revive the ancient dream of a reign of Reason and Expertise. The only way to end our current state of "political gridlock," he contends, is to create "a temporary bipartisan grand coalition of national unity." Sorensen appeals to the winner of the 1984 election to appoint a vice president and half his cabinet from the losing party, renounce a second term, and share decision-making with a Council of Elders (ex-presidents, a well-known former secretary of state, etc.) and a National Council of Economic Cooperation and Coordination composed of business, labor, and consumer leaders. Politics would be formally adjourned until November, 1988.

Surely Mr. Sorensen jests. The rituals of American politics, however cumbersome, are the main source of the authority of American government. A government above politics would be weak, not powerful, unless perhaps it represented a vast new party. And for such a third party to arise, Mr. Sorensen's sense of millennial urgency would have to be more widely shared among the electorate.

Sorensen's proposal is a lawyer's brief for "coalition government" on the British model, addressed to presidential candidates

and their advisors. Why any of them should pause to listen is unclear. Among the current candidates Mr. Reagan is surely the least likely to do so. He was elected in 1980 and is running again on the proposition that, in domestic matters, less government is better government. While Mr. Sorensen's crisis coalition is based on the opposite premise, he marshals no evidence to suggest that a revolt against Reagan's credo is under way. In foreign affairs, where Sorensen's alarm is understandable, his expectations seem even more tenuous. Sorensen himself notes that no foreign policy consensus exists even within the parties. What then—short of war—will bring us all together behind the elders and the experts?

There is a powerful case to be made against the current feudalism of special interests, but Sorensen's solution puts the cart before the horse. A bipartisan cabinet will not make a bipartisan country, nor will a coalition of representatives usher in a love-feast among the represented. Warring factions will simply repudiate their representatives and go on warring. Sorensen's aim is to restore the proverbial "vital center" from the top down. It will have to be rebuilt from the bottom up. Once consensus is restored in the country, its administrative expression will take care of itself.

What is missing from Sorensen's scenario, as from much of the current scene, is democratic leadership—loosely defined, a unifying vision orchestrating a diversity of passions. Contemporary politics are so encumbered with pollsters, beauticians, and sloganeers that politicians of genuine vision find it difficult to prosper or be heard. As unsolved problems accumulate, impatient political technicians are tempted to seek mechanical substitutes for leadership. Alas, there are none that work. Elder Sorensen would do better to aid his own party in its search for new leaders of passion and foresight. [WV]

CORRECTION

In "The Nuclear Trade," by Daniel Poneman (March, 1984), editorial modifications, in the author's judgment, altered the meaning of some passages in the original manuscript. A phrase was added stating that an illegal transshipment of computers was seized in Europe en route from South Africa to Moscow. Also, it was incorrectly stated that a nuclear device detonated by the Indian Government in 1974 "contained heavy water supplied by the U.S." In fact, the heavy water was supplied to a Canadian research reactor, the spent fuel of which provided the plutonium for the device.