Election result tells us America is a fractured, angry, increasingly polarised country

Alex KANE

IN his recent study of Donald Trump's use of language, Roderick Hart, a scholar of political rhetoric, describes him as less a toddler and more an adolescent: "Moody, impulsive, terribly needy for love, resentful of authority, full of fears he cannot admit, and emotionally raw."

We saw all of that in the early hours of Wednesday, when he stood at his podium in the White House and whinged about fraud, being robbed of victory and denied the "celebration we were planning".

I suppose we should have been grateful he hadn't donned one of those gaudy military uniforms you used to see worn by Latin American despots in the 1970s and then, after his temper tantrum, declared martial law and sent in the National Guard to surround and close down counting centres.

Even by the standards of craziness he has set since 2016, this was an epically bonkers meltdown, the sort of meltdown which most parents would have responded to by grounding him for a month and confiscating his mobile phone.

But here's the thing: win or lose (and I'm writing this on Wednesday afternoon) Trump has added a few million votes to his 2016 tally, performed far better than the polls had suggested and proved that there is a market for a political/electoral campaign based entirely on division and fire-starting.

Crucially, if he does remain in the Oval Office he doesn't have to worry about re-election in 2024.

If you thought he was uncontrollable and unrestrained during the last four years, just imagine what he would be like if he didn't have to worry about facing the electorate ever again.

When I first wrote about him in *The Irish News* in February 2016 I argued he was not so much a demagogue as a reality TV star trying to win something which could be best described as "the latest series of America's Gone Completely Bonkers". Well, I was right in one way: he did see himself as the lead performer in a reality TV show, willing to do anything – and I really do mean anything – to sustain the ratings.

But I was wrong in another way: he is a demagogue. He doesn't give a damn about democracy. I'm pretty sure he doesn't give a damn about the people he claims to champion, either.

If he loses to Biden will he go quietly? It is clear he is a few million votes behind him in the overall vote, even though he did win more than he won four years ago (but so did the Democrats). He has already said he is heading to the Supreme Court (although it's not clear at this point what his route would be).

If Biden does cross the winning line it will be by just a few votes over the 270 required by the Electoral College, making it inevitable Trump will dog-whistle his anger to his followers, enough of whom will be prepared to take to the streets.

MELTDOWN: US president Donald Trump, speaking in the East Room of the White House early on Wednesday, where he had an 'epically bonkers meltdown' in response to the election results PICTURE: Evan Vucci/AP

Trump, like all petulant, narcissistic, dissembling bullies, can never take responsibility for his own failures. It's always the fault of someone else: and if that means demonising them and setting them up for attack by others, then so be it. He'll slam the doors, point the fingers, roar the lies and egg-on the dewy-eyed gullible to do his bidding.

A few weeks ago, when he told the white supremacist group Proud Boys to "stand back and stand by", he was, in effect, putting them on notice to wait for his call and come to his defence.

Trump is a demagogue. He doesn't give a damn about democracy. Biden is too weak and uninspiring to bring the country together

What does the result say about America? Not much that we didn't already know. It's a fractured, angry, increasingly polarised country. Trump wasn't interested in healing: healing, from his perspective, doesn't keep your base on board. He had no interest in those who don't vote for him, or share his views, so he had no interest in the 'united' states of America.

The problem is that Biden, assuming he wins, is too weak and uninspiring to bring the country together; and, from the outset, he will be marked down as a one-term president, so key players will always be looking over his shoulder.

Something is changing in America: a change millions have no desire to embrace. Is there a new generation of younger leaders and influencers who can play a positive role in shaping and steering that change?

More important, can they do it without putting themselves in hock to the specific interests of billionaires who have their own agenda?

ON THIS DAY

NOVEMBER 6 1920

Omagh Row Over MacSwiney

A SPECIAL meeting of the County Tyrone Technical Instruction Committee was held in Dungannon yesterday evening to consider the action of Mr J J Mullowney, vice-principal of Omagh Technical School in closing the building on 27th October as a mark of respect on the death of the Lord Mayor of Cork.

Mr James Dickson, DL presided and the County Director reported that on that day he received a telegram from Mr Mullowney which read: 'Catholic population of Omagh want schools closed today as mark of respect to Lord Mayor.' The vice-principal was told that he had no power to close the school. The County Director read the following letter which he had received from Mr Mullowney: ' I intended to follow your advice and carry out your orders [to keep the School open] but I was accosted on the street and ordered by the IRA not to have any classes. I acted on that order …'

In discussion Mr Bingham moved that Mr Mullowney might to act as a teacher but that Mr Walmsley should be appointed vice-principal in his place. The motion was passed.

The chairman said the Committee had acted with leniency. Mr Mullowney could have been dismissed for the offence. The work of technical education in Tyrone had been carried out successfully for the past seventeen years without religious or sectarian interference and politics or religion should not be allowed to interfere in the working of the school.

Balloonist To Head Specials

WE ARE asked officially to announce that Wing Commander John Dunville, DL of Redburn, Holywood has accepted the appointment of Commandant of the Special Constabulary. Commander Dunville, who was one of the pioneer balloonists, joined the Naval Air Service as Flight Lieutenant in 1915.

It is expected that the UVF in Belfast will enlist practically en masse.

'Tans' Killed In Battle

A PRESS representative, describing the battle between civilians and uniformed men in the village of Ballinalee, County Longford, says: The military and the Black and Tans in nine lorries were returning in to Longford from Granard, which they had just sacked. They had to pass through the village of Ballinalee.

Descending from the lorries in the village, they attempted to set fire to a house at 2 a.m. The visit was anticipated and, from concealed positions, fire was opened up on the military and Black and Tans who returned the fire. A report claims that seventeen Black and Tans were killed. **The IRA ambush was led by Sean McEoin (1893-1973), the 'blacksmith of Ballinalee'. He was later sentenced to death but freed during the truce of 1921.**

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com