



WINNER Take All!

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THE CENSUS of 1960 turned up one hundred and ninety million souls living in these United States. Of this number, roughly one hundred and eight million qualify to register as voters. This is 56 per cent of the nation, and this body of people constitutes the electorate of the United States. But, of the number of persons eligible to register, only eighty-one million have actually done so; twenty-seven million have not, for reasons ranging from indifference to intimidation. The total vote cast in the 1964 Presidential sweepstakes was roughly sixty-nine million. This is 64 per cent of the electorate, but it is only 36 per cent of the population. The 1964 election was won by a candidate who garnered forty-two million votes. This figure translates into 60 per cent of the votes cast, 51

per cent of the registered voters, 38 per cent of the electorate, and only 22 per cent of the population. This is "the majority" which, in the eyes of some political theorists, confers a mandate on the victorious party to impose its program on the reluctant "minority" of the nation, that is, on the other 78 per cent!

This is the theory of majoritarianism, ardently espoused by some articulate intellectuals. Here, for example, is Professor James McGregor Burns of Williams College. Dr. Burns declares that "... as a liberal I believe in majority rule and majority rule is a question of adding up 'bodies' (or, I hope, adding up minds)." Professor Burns believes that men who embrace the conservative position have thereby foresworn what he calls the numbers game, this game having been staked out by liberals as their very own. "Because as

soon as conservatives start to base their principles on numbers," he writes, "then they're playing the liberal game (what they call the liberal game; what I would call subordinating their basic values to a liberal premise, which is the premise of majority rule)."

It may be conceded that a "majority" has, by definition, the power to bull its way through and work its will on the nation, but does it have the *right* to do this? Is there not some principle or right or rule of ethics which even a "majority" ought to acknowledge, and to which it should yield? Addressing himself to this question, Professor Burns rephrases it and then gives his answer. "What does a majority have the right to do?" he asks. "It has the right to do anything in the economic and social arena that is relevant to our national problems and national purposes — except to change the basic rules of the game."

Unqualified Majority Rule

That final disclaimer sounds like an afterthought, and some political theorists support the majority rule idea without qualification. Professor Herman Finer of the University of Chicago, for instance, writes, "For in a democracy right is what the majority makes it to be." In other words,

the majority has the power to carry out its will, and thus whatever it does is all right; its program is right, by definition.

If so, then the liberals, by winning an election, have won the right to run the country as they please — including, Burns suggests, the right to be let alone by conservatives! The liberals now have a majority of the nation behind them, Professor Burns asserts, and "I want the liberals of the nation to have a right to rule in what I think is their day today."

Professor Burns seems not to have noticed, but in saying this he has abandoned the majority rule idea for the more exciting notion of Winner Take All! In the politics of winner-take-all — which is modern liberalism — officials begin to treat public office as their own private property, with benefits for them to enjoy but without the responsibilities owners assume in rightful property relationships. The national government becomes an article of commerce whose capture is worth over a hundred billion dollars annually to those who gain possession of it. Those who win an election, even by the slimmest of margins, have a mandate from the country — provided they are liberals! — to impose their program on the whole nation. It is amusing that those who begin

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