

**PL6-- "EARTH TO GORE: CONCEDE NOW TO FIGHT ANOTHER DAY", SALON, 11/30/00**

*"We must make the rescue of the environment the central organizing principle for civilization ... We can believe in (the) future and work to achieve it and preserve it, or we can whirl blindly on, behaving as if one day there will be no children to inherit our legacy. The choice is ours; the earth is in the balance."*

-- Al Gore, Earth In The Balance

**Dear Vice-President Gore,**

**It is clearly time now for you to put your own words into practice by conceding this divided year 2000 election, in which you will have no environmental mandate even in the unlikely event that you win, and instead launch a four-year campaign to take the White House in 2004 in a way that will allow you take the major actions necessary to save the biosphere. You can only make the environment the central organizing principle for civilization if you first make it the central principle for your Presidential campaign - a course you did not follow this time.**

**This will not only be good policy but, in your case, good politics. You squandered this election because you could not connect psychologically with swing voters. If you continue to "whirl blindly on" your present course, the odds are less that you will triumph in the manual recount than that you will confirm forever the widespread belief that you place power over principle.**

**But if you use your political exile for the next four years to harmonize your inner and outer quests, you can not only win in 2004 but do so with a sweeping mandate for change. History is filled with examples of leaders who partly achieved greatness because of deep transformations that could only have occurred out of office. You wrote in your book, "we must restore a balance within ourselves between who we are and what we are doing." Your leaving office for the first time in 24 years can be a blessing if you use the time to follow your**

**own advice by aligning your politics with your most passionately held inner beliefs.**

**Your passion leaps off the printed page when you write, "I cannot stand the thought of leaving my children with a degraded earth and a diminished future." But when did voters hear that genuine passion in your 2000 campaign? They heard prescription drugs, taxes, Social Security. Your passion to rescue the environment was virtually absent from your paid advertising, speech-making or debates. Only if you campaign next time from your heart about what you really care about, speak with genuine not feigned passion, and come for the inside out not outside in, will you stand a chance of not merely winning but mobilizing the nation for the goal you care most about.**

**I write as one who hoped you would win this time. I strongly believe that the threat facing the biosphere transcends all other issues, and was cheered by the remarkable fact that a man this close to the Presidency understands this threat more profoundly than any other political leader now alive.**

**I also respect you as a person. My few meetings with you, and reports from trusted friends who know you far better, indicate that you are a well-meaning and decent guy. Your occasional exaggerations and public phoniness represent more a divided nature and deep insecurity than something evil or dangerous. You would clearly be a far better President than George W. Bush, a man who could not read let alone understand your book, and who diminishes everything he touches.**

**But it is my very hopes for you that lead me to suggest you concede now. Many will urge you to concede for negative reasons, i.e. that you risk being seen as a "sore loser" and damaging your chances of being elected in 2004. But the real reason you should concede is a positive one: you will be in a stronger position to fight for the biosphere if you win with a real mandate in 2004 than taking office now. Four years is a lifetime in politics. But you know better than most that it is but the flicker of an eyelash in terms of mobilizing the nation to make the great changes necessary to rescue the biosphere.**

**Sources reveal that you decided to make pocketbook issues like prescription drugs, taxes or Social Security the "central organizing principle" of your 2000 campaign because you bought your political advisors' advice that the environment was not a "voting issue," and that being seen as an environmental "extremist" would cost your votes. You followed the ageold political rationale of 'I have to get elected on the issues people care about before I can do anything about those I most care about.'**

**But your fatal error was listening to the Coelhos, Shrums, Eskews, Greenbergs and Daleys, rather than your heart. For Presidential politics in the 2000 elections was more about psychology than politics, personality than policy. And America's political class, as evidenced by its total misreading of the public's response to Monicagate, is so out of touch with its own feelings that it cannot understand the deep psychological currents that really drive American politics.**

**Your unwillingness to unleash your passion for saving the biosphere was the single biggest reason you lost this election. Swing voters did not need to be convinced that you were better for their pocketbooks, though no harm would have been done by stressing these issues as a secondary theme. They needed above all to believe that you were an authentic person who had real feelings. You would have far more authentically feelingful saying "I want to fight for you because I know you care about your children and grandchildren and want to leave them a healthy biosphere," than saying "I want to fight for your prescription drugs."**

**By downplaying your signature issue, global warming and other threats to the biosphere, you failed the one true test of character that could have convinced the public that you were a genuine person.**

**And in so doing you also lost one of the greatest political opportunities of your campaign: capitalizing on the alarming report by the world's top scientists that climate change could be twice as bad as previously estimated, released a few weeks before election. Had**

**you risked educating the public about global warming, and then been vindicated by a report from these top scientists, you would have been helped far more than simply claiming "I am my own man" but failing to demonstrate why.**

**Your attempt to show "character" by suddenly presenting yourself as a tribune of the working classes and foe of the corporations, after a lifetime as a centrist Democrat, could not succeed despite your brief post-convention bounce. When your son almost died you were seized by a vision of the need to save the biosphere, not to make prescription drugs cheaper or shore up Social Security. By ignoring the key issues that have long moved you, and focusing instead on issues you'd never highlighted before, you played into the hands of your opponents who understood the election was about character. It was no coincidence that the tag they chose among all those available was "liar". You talked prescription drugs or Bush's "risky" tax scheme, they responded "liar." You never effectively answered that charge for swing voters who doubted your credibility, and could only have been convinced by actions not words.**

**Ronald Reagan's 1980 experience is instructive. He made balancing the budget his signature issue, despite the fact that it also was not a voting issue and was seen by most people as a narrow right-wing concern. But it was a psychological master-stroke. For it convinced the public that he was a man of conviction, that he pushed issues because he believed in them despite the political consequences. Had you done the same on global warming and the environment it would have been a winner for you, not as a voting issue but rather where you really needed it: to demonstrate personal authenticity.**

**East Coast commentators and talking heads are fond of the using the word "psychobabble" to rule out any serious discussion of psychological issues as applied to political campaigns. They instead treat us to endless hours of political analysis, as if people vote for President primarily because of the candidates' stand on taxes, or whether they campaigned enough in Ohio or Tennessee.**

**If this campaign proved anything, however, it is that such analysis is little more than "polibabble" and that the real issues on which at least swing voters voted were far more psychological than political. Although most of the commentary since the election has referred to how our nation is "split down the middle", how precisely are we divided? It isn't on ideology or issues. The "split" is psychological not political. The key voters you needed emotionally connected more with Mr. Bush than yourself. As CNN political commentator Bill Schneider puts it (although he largely ignores his own dictum in his own political analysis), "the vote for President is the most B\_personal\_B vote voters cast."**

**What does Schneider's statement really mean? Well, think about your friends. Although you can list all the qualities that you like about them, the real reason she or he is your "friend" is less easy to put into words. It's about such non-verbal, *feeling* variables as a commonality of sensibility, trust, comfort.**

**The "issues" broke your way. If swing voters voted on them, you would have won by a landslide. Almost all the votes you lost in this group were not on policy but personality, a feeling that they didn't trust who you were. Although they knew you were smarter, they connected more with Mr. Bush, a feelingful man who wears his many vulnerabilities, puppy-like desire to be liked, and personal candor on his sleeve.**

**The election was indeed "split" between you and Mr. Bush. But it was on a psychological spectrum that runs from "feelingful to nonfeelingful" and "authentic to phoney," not "liberal to conservative" politics.**

**Your political problem, as seen from a psychological point of view, appears to stem from a deeply divided nature. As the Nicholas Lemann article in the New Yorker indicates, you are most comfortable in the realm of abstract ideas. You have a deeply spiritual core but are more attracted by New Age than traditional religious ideas, have been more exposed to the world of therapy by your wife than most politicians, have a deeply sensual side that you rarely show**

**publicly, and privately have far more liberal views on sensitive issues like gun control than you show in public. You are, in short, a rather typical member of the New Age-oriented, baby-boomer, 45-million strong, politically liberal, cohort of "cultural creatives" identified by sociologist Paul Ray.**

**If there is one thing this group has in common besides relative affluence and a lack of instinctive identification with working people, it is a discomfort with conventional politics. It is no coincidence that few major politicians in America today are willing to do the therapy they so badly need, hang with Jean Houston (look where it got Hillary Clinton) or Naomi Wolf (look what happened to you), or lounge around in hot tubs discussing Sartre and smoking dope on a lazy Saturday afternoon.**

**You clearly have thus entered politics at great personal cost, forcing you to repress many key aspects of your personality in order to "do good" by holding public office. And your disdain for politics has led you to make the cynical choice of relying on operatives like Tony Coelho, lobbyists like Tony Podesta, and media mercenaries like Carter Eskew, who are above all distinguished by their willingness to put personal gain above political principles. It is this divided nature, the feelings you publicly repress, that I would suggest primarily account for the stiffness and artificiality that so turns off swing voters.**

**Also, at the risk of offending you - since the one major trait you reportedly share with George Bush is a dislike of parental analysis - it seems quite clear that a second major psychological handicap that cost you this election is your failure to break free from internalized parental voices which say that you are not good enough, and that you must constantly prove yourself.**

**I remember once attending a Senate hearing on High Definition Television in 1989, after your disastrous 1988 run for President. You used most of your time declaiming on HDTV, barely bothering to ask a question of the witness. I remember thinking at the time that you must be deeply insecure, since your main goal was clearly to show how smart you were. I can't think of a better explanation for the many**

**minor but telling exaggerations since - inventing the Internet, serving as a model for Love Story, etc. - that have given your political enemies so much ammunition.**

**What to do about all this? Well, that is a matter for debate. It seems clear, however, that the one thing you should NOT do is more of the same. If you spend the next four years ignoring your psychological imperatives and continuing this campaign's disjointed politics, you will forego any real chance of making a major difference on the civilization's central organizing principle, even if you do win.**

**It would clearly be far more fruitful for you to embark on both a political and personal path designed, once and for all, to allow you to truly become "your own man."**

**Politically, this might mean creating your own post-election political/policy organization to around a platform that harmonizes with your inner passions. While this would include the pocketbook issues, of course, it would give a far higher priority to mobilizing support for issues related to saving the biosphere. You can use these four years to figure out a way to make this case without ruining your chances for President, helped by what will undoubtedly be a plethora of evidence on biospheric degradatin, and the inadequacies of Bush Administration policy to deal with them.**

**Personally, your top priority is clearly to heal the division between your heart and mind, to find a way to speak in public about what is you feel most deeply within. Campaigning first and foremost for the cause you most believe in will help. So, too, will using your time out of office to engage in deep personal reflection, contemplation, meditation and soul-searching. Hopefully, a more feelingful public expression of your inner feelings will emerge from such a journey. This is not something that can be feigned. We can smell a phony even before we know why. I suppose voters are not yet ready for you to enter formal therapy to learn to release repressed feelings. But there are many other venues - personal discussions, reading, video tapes, self-education courses - to figure out how to surface your feelings, and come from within rather than without.**

**The political elite may call it psychobabble to suggest that your chance for the Presidency might depend more on your undertaking a psychological and spiritual journey than your political positioning. But it is long past time for you to jettison your primary reliance on the political pundits. They cost you this election. Only you, coming from within, can win next time.**

**I really hope you give it a try, for many reasons. Our young people, non-voters and the disillusioned in our society desperately need leaders who put principle above politics.**

**But no one has put the reason you need to concede and move on better than yourself. Earth is truly in the balance if American cannot elect leaders able to create a mandate to save it.**

**Sincerely,**

**Fred Branfman**