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Carter's Instant Voter Registration

Or: How to Steal Elections Without Even Trying

The most far reaching proposal advanced by President Jimmy Carter during his first few months in office was his plan to Federalize elections and allow anyone to vote after showing any type of identification on election day. This would eliminate existing state requirements that voters be pre-registered. In other words, voters would have "instant registration" on election day.

The Carter Administration called this bill "election reform," probably on the theory that anything labeled "reform" would be uncritically accepted by Congress and the American people. The truth is, however, that instant voter registration would be the key to massive election frauds and make it unlikely that we could ever have honest elections in the United States.

Busing Voters to the Polls

The Carter proposal to allow everybody to vote on Election Day without prior registration would make our elections a farce because they would be dominated by illegal votes cast by unidentified persons instructed how to vote by political bosses.

Years ago when paper ballots were used in the big cities, the most widespread cheating technique was "chain voting." The political boss would steal one ballot, mark it for the candidates supported by the political machine, and then start his chain of hired voters. Each hired voter would cast a marked ballot and return a fresh ballot to his boss, who would then keep marking ballots all day long in a steady stream.

Since voting machines have come into use, the principal method of stealing votes is "assistance voting." This gimmick was originated by the do-gooders who argued that people should not be denied the right to vote merely because they don't know how to use a voting machine. But "assistance voting" can also be used like this: Step No. 1 is to convince some people on welfare, Aid to Dependent Children, or Social Security that the political boss is somehow responsible for the continuance of their monthly government checks. Step No. 2 is to instruct these gullible voters to go to the polls and say, "I need assistance." A poll judge from both political parties then accompanies the voter into the booth to help him to vote. This destroys the secrecy

of the ballot, and the voters obey their previous instructions.

Although plenty of election crooks are usually available, stuffing the ballot box still has to be done on a one-by-one basis. Each hired voter must be pre-registered as a resident of the precinct.

The Carter plan for allowing everyone to vote without previous registration could replace occasional election frauds with massive cheating. Under the Carter plan, the political bosses would gather up uninformed, apathetic persons who would not otherwise bother to vote, instruct them how to vote, and bus them to Polling Place No. 1 where they would vote after merely showing their driver's licenses. The bus could then take them to Polling Place No. 2 where, after being provided with phony identification, they could all vote again. This massive cheating could be repeated again and again, so long as phony identification could be provided.

If you think that busing school children is expensive, upsetting, and a violation of personal freedom, that's nothing to the busing that would result from the Carter plan to allow voting without registration.

More Federal Spending, Of Course

Under the Carter proposal, anyone would be able to vote by the simple process of signing an affidavit that he is a qualified voter and producing some sort of document to assert the location of his residence, such as a driver's license or an affidavit from another voter.

Under the Carter plan, the states would be required to eliminate their present pre-registration requirements for Federal elections. The higher administrative costs caused by this new system would be paid for by a Federal grant of 20 cents times the number of voters in the last Presidential election. The Carter proposal would increase the Federal Election Commission bureaucracy by millions of Federal tax dollars per year.

But there is much, much more. An additional Federal grant would be given to encourage states to adopt election day registration for state and local elections, too. Still another grant would be given to states that develop "outreach" plans to stimulate maximum voter participation by such gimmicks as registration by mail, mobile units, and bilingual programs. These bonus grants would be based on the same 20-cent formula as the basic subsidy, with a maximum total subsidy to any

state of 80 cents per voter. The cost of these subsidies is estimated to be \$48 million for each Federal election.

Low Voter Turnout? So What!

The reason President Carter gave for the elimination of pre-registration for voting is that he is "deeply concerned that our country ranks behind at least 20 other democracies in its level of voter participation." Only 54 percent of our voting-age population voted in 1976. In Western European countries, about 80 percent vote.

So what! In Communist countries, 99 percent of the people vote. Does that make their election processes superior to ours? Voting in the Soviet Union is a government-enforced obligation. Voting in the United States is not and should not be an obligation. It is a right that may be freely exercised or not, as the individual wishes.

The reason more Americans do not vote is not because it is too difficult or inconvenient for them to register. A 1975 Census Bureau report on voter participation showed that only 3.8 percent gave "unable to register" as the reason for not voting, as compared with 15.3 percent who said "not interested." No figures are available on how many share the attitude of the aggressive nonvoters who sported bumper strips prior to the 1976 election that said: "Don't vote -- it only encourages them."

It is likely that those who choose not to vote are consciously or unconsciously expressing their view that it doesn't make any difference which candidate wins. Making it easier to vote will not relieve this concern.

On the other hand, the Carter "reform" proposal will make it very easy for dishonest voters to vote two or three times at different polling places. As a practical matter, officials in the polling places would be compelled to hand a ballot to any unknown and unidentified person who showed up with a piece of paper in his or her hand. There would be no way whatsoever to identify the person or to verify the piece of paper.

"The Instant Vote Fraud Act of 1977"

All the officers of Project LEAP (Legal Elections in All Precincts), the independent, non-partisan Chicago organization that has worked diligently to abolish election frauds and give Chicago honest elections, are completely opposed to the Carter's instant voter registration bill. Thomas Roeser, chairman of Project LEAP, calls it "the Instant Vote Fraud Act of 1977."

Mr. Roeser testified before the House Administration Committee that the proposal "is a masterpiece of deceptive packaging, designed to lure us into thinking it's a great reform." Its passage, he said, would result in "a quick return to the cesspool conditions of former days, with totally false registrations, 'ghost' voting by those long dead or moved away, voting by telephone, and all the other tricks precinct captains developed over the years to produce inflated vote totals."

"Congress ... will re-open the door to vote fraud, in Chicago and in every other area that has ever had an election-day problem. You (Congress) are unwilling to spend the millions of dollars that will be required to police the polls and prosecute the new crimes that will be committed. You are dumping on us and every other

area subject to similar problems the potential of wholesale vote theft. You will return us to a system where every close election will leave the victor with the stigma of having won a corrupt election," says Roeser.

Too many candidates in Illinois history have been elected with just such a stigma. Project LEAP has struggled valiantly to make sure we have honest elections. The Carter instant voter registration will wipe out all their years of work.

"Graveyard Voting, Tombstone Voting"

Almost all Chicago officials of both political parties are opposed to the Carter bill. County Clerk Stanley T. Kusper has deplored the bill as imposing an administrative nightmare, and John M. Hanly, chairman of the Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, charged that it would "set the cause of honest elections back many years."

Hanly, who was a Federal agent in the Secret Service for 36 years, said that the bill would usher in a new era of "graveyard voting, tombstone voting, voting the family dog." The bill would "leave us naked and defenseless" and "create chaos in our polling places." "You can bamboozle an election judge," Hanly testified. "You can do it many times. It is feasible. It is possible. It will undoubtedly happen if we open this door."

Hanly added: "It will erode the integrity of our elections since it is totally lacking in any safeguards on the front end at the time of registration and voting. Further, it will congest and disrupt our polling places and certainly turn off, if not away, the voter who is civic-minded enough to get registered in the normal way."

Hanly and States Attorney Bernard Carey testified twice against the bill at Washington hearings.

Ruth C. Clusen, national president of the League of Women Voters (and an active ERA supporter), endorsed the bill, and cited its stiff criminal penalties as a deterrent to vote fraud.

But Sheldon Gardner, a Project LEAP official, rebutted her, stating: "Election fraud is one of the most unprosecuted crimes in the United States. I assure you now that no one will get 19 years for vote fraud no matter how heinous the crime." Also answering the point about the non-deterrent value of stiff penalties for election frauds, Chicago Daily News columnists Gilbreth & Schultz commented, "The simpletons who mouth these idiocies can't be familiar with elections, Chicago style."

Richard Barnett, another Project LEAP representative, said that it would be impossible to determine if voters were using false identification. "Under this bill," he said, "It's much easier to vote with false IDs than it is for a minor to get into a Chicago bar."

The Secret Justice Department Memo

So determined was the Carter Administration to ram through its instant voter registration bill that it used executive privilege for the first time to suppress a Justice Department memorandum on the bill that warns of increased vote fraud.

The memorandum prepared by the Justice Department's criminal division was disclosed at a hearing of the Senate Rules Committee. Senator Robert P. Griffin said he had not seen the memorandum, but was informed that it warned that the Carter bill would be "an

invitation to fraud.”

A lawyer in the criminal division of the Justice Department, Craig Donsanto, acknowledged that he had a copy with him. When Senator Griffin asked Donsanto for it so that the Senate Rules Committee could have the benefit of the Justice Department's research, Deputy Attorney General Peter F. Flaherty refused to let Mr. Donsanto give it to the Senate Committee.

“Are you claiming executive privilege?” Senator Griffin asked. “Yes, sir,” Mr. Flaherty replied.

In response to Senator Griffin's questioning, Mr. Donsanto admitted that the Carter bill might “cause an increase in some kinds of fraud”, and that the bill might make the job of the criminal division of the Justice Department in prosecuting voting frauds “a little more difficult.”

Republican Party Mistake

Nothing shows the folly and the ineptness of the Republican Party any more than the fact that, when Carter announced his instant voter registration plan on March 22, 1977, Republican leaders climbed aboard. Republican Senate leader Howard H. Baker, Jr., of Tennessee, endorsed “some sort of universal registration.” Republican House leader John J. Rhodes of Arizona predicted that the bill would be approved “in substantially the same form, with a lot of Republican support, including my own.” Republican National Chairman Bill Brock said that the proposal “has merit, but safeguards are clearly necessary.”

These were not off-the-cuff statements. They were issued only after the Republican leaders had conferred and decided against a negative party reaction. As columnist Patrick Buchanan commented, this proves that “whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad.”

Buchanan continued, “Embracing this scheme, the GOP, the sick man of American politics, is reaching from its own hospital bed to pull the plug on the life-support system that keeps it alive.” Other commentators called the Republican position “euthanasia for the GOP.”

After inquiring around Washington as to why Republican leaders took this incredible position, Buchanan concluded that it was the GOP's “desperate hunger for the ‘respectability’ the elite media provide, its abhorrence of a political brawl even to save itself, its absence of conviction and lack of faith.”

Buchanan asked the question, “Why does not the Republican Party speak the truth? Parasitic slugs who pay no taxes, who show such disinterest in the political process that they will not get off their duffs to register, have no business at the ballot box on election day, casting a vote in ignorance and cancelling out the ballot of some conscientious citizen.”

Those short-sighted Republican leaders, however, heard from the grassroots who have for some time been demonstrating more smarts about politics than their leaders. By April 6, when the first hearing was held, most of the Republican leaders had reversed their position, and by mid-May, even Congressman John J. Rhodes announced he would vote no.

There is no secret why Carter wants the instant voter registration. He thinks it will bring him more votes. His pollster, Patrick Caddell, reported that the 1976 election's sole “surprise” was Wisconsin, which Caddell's polls had predicted would go for Ford. By a tiny margin, Wisconsin went to Carter. Post-election analyses showed that Carter's unexpected margin came from un-

registered voters who, for the first time in Wisconsin, were allowed to vote without prior registration.

Kevin Phillips, the respected authority on election statistics, estimated that Carter would have won nine more states that Ford carried, including Illinois and California, if same-day, on-site, instant registration had been allowed.

However, opposition to the Carter instant vote registration is not a partisan issue. Even the Gallup Poll reported that 55 percent of Americans oppose the President's plan for instant registration, with only 40 percent favoring it. Even members of the Democratic Party are against the plan by a 53-43 percent margin.

No Way to Stop Vote Frauds

Under the Carter instant voter registration proposal, there would be absolutely no way to prevent a fraudulent vote from being cast and counted. Rhode Island Secretary of State Robert F. Burns testified before the Senate Rules Committee that this bill “not only invites fraud, it makes it easy -- and it makes it virtually impossible to catch anyone at it.”

Eliminating pre-registration would do away with the one-month interval between the closing of registration and election day and would prevent election officials from canvassing neighborhoods, posting voter lists, and taking other steps to verify the identity and residence of prospective voters. It would deprive candidates of their right to have voter registration lists so they can know who are the voters in their district.

Under the Carter proposal, there would be no way to stop aliens from voting, since they have driver's licenses and other forms of ID. There are about 12 million aliens in the country.

Forging false identifications will become big business. Remember the Chicago “welfare queen” who had 200 different IDs in order to cash in on welfare payments!

More charges of fraud will mean more contests to be settled after the election, with a consequent loss of faith in the democratic process.

Congressman Charles Wiggins (who will always be remembered for his valiant effort in the House in 1971 to add a qualifying clause to the Equal Rights Amendment and thereby save Americans from ERA's rigid, absolute, no-exemptions language) spoke out forcefully against the instant voter registration bill. He said that the Carter proposal would nullify a 180-year American tradition of state jurisdiction over elections. He said, “There is no way we can avoid the possibility of fraud if we adopt this plan.”

Some groups, however, would benefit from instant voter registration: (1) Political machines and organizations willing and able to herd people to the polls by pressure and intimidation. (2) Organizations and candidates willing and able to engage in largescale fraud. (3) Groups capable of shifting organizational resources to target areas late in election campaigns. (4) Candidates willing to use demagogy to make strong last-minute emotional appeals. (5) Candidates favored by a mass-media blitz in the last days of the campaign.

It is difficult to see how any plan could be imagined that would cause more election frauds. The Carter instant voter registration proposal would be the death knell for honest elections, and should be decisively defeated by those who care about the integrity of self-government.

The New Feudalism

A highly reactionary objective has emerged as the goal of a growing coalition of lawyers, academicians, and politicians. Put bluntly, they are trying to eliminate the American concept of freehold private property and replace it with the discredited concept of "social property."

"Land use and control" is the euphemism that usually attaches to the proposals they are introducing into Congress and state legislatures with increasing frequency. Their effect would be to deprive individuals of their right to the free use of their own property, and to substitute Federal control, or sometimes state control.

That's not what the bills say, of course. They use the deceptively disarming language of the do-gooders. The bills may talk about the environmental, economic and social implications of developments of regional impact. They may talk about areas of critical state concern.

The bills may talk about areas having a significant effect on an existing or proposed public facility. They may talk about experimental development, or about areas of major potential. They may talk about the "partnership" of the government and the landowner.

Best Brains in Washington?

Most of these land control bills are based on the assumption that the best brains are in Washington, and the second best brains are in the State Capitols. The end result would be more bureaucracy, more taxes, and less freedom. Their common denominator is to deprive individuals of their right to the free use of their own property, and to substitute Federal control, or sometimes state control.

These land use and control bills are really a reactionary revival of the medieval system called feudalism. That was a system that defined the relation of persons to land. The essence was that land cannot be "owned" by anyone; it can merely be held on a temporary basis subject to the overriding good of society.

Feudalism served the needs of the Middle Ages and endured for some 600 years. It provided military security in an era of brigands and invaders. It promoted social stability and it curbed economic fluctuations. It imposed a well-understood system of mutual rights and responsibilities.

The defect of feudalism was that it stifled individual liberty, productivity, and self-government. Fortunately, by the time the colonists came to America, the English political theorists had rejected feudalism and accepted the theory that the purpose of government was to secure natural rights, among which was the right of the individual to own the land on which he labored.

Freehold Property Essential to Liberty

Our Founding Fathers, raised in the intellectual climate of John Locke and William Blackstone, recognized individual freehold property as the central ingredient of liberty.

The fundamental premise of those promoting land use and control is the same as feudalism's, namely, that rights in land are not owned by individuals, but merely held at the sufferance of some superior. Big Brother in Washington has been nominated as the modern successor to the medieval monarch or feudal lord.

Sometimes the New Feudalists wrap their merchandise in the theory of the "public trust"--the theory that the state holds public lands in trust for the public and that any attempt to sell these lands to private interests, or otherwise divert them to private use, will be viewed with grave skepticism.

It is important for Americans to understand that the basic concepts of individual liberty and self-government depend on a widespread ownership of private property. When the land controllers come forth with their modern retreats of feudalism, they should be told that they are out of step with the principles that built our great nation.



To understand SALT II,
be sure to reread:
**Ambush at
Vladivostok**
by Phyllis Schlafly & Chester Ward
Rear Adm., USN (Ret.)
\$2 from Pere Marquette Press, Box 495, Alton, IL 62002

Phyllis Schlafly is the co-author of four books on nuclear strategy: *The Gravediggers* (1964), *Strike From Space* (1965), *The Betrayers* (1968), and *Kissinger on the Couch* (1975). She has testified on national security before the Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services Committees. Her 1972 series of interviews with military and nuclear experts was aired on 70 television and 50 radio stations. An honors graduate of Washington University and member of Phi Beta Kappa, she has a Master's Degree from Harvard University.

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