



RUNNING FOR OFFICE-A CONSCIOUS CHOICE

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In politics, there often arises a certain conflict between what the politician wants and what society seeks. We are given the right to vote for political officials and we exercise this right in order to enjoy what those officials promise during their campaign period. Most political candidates already have a clear picture of what people want in those who govern them. Most of them already have the people's weaknesses down pat. Campaigning has become more than just the ability to kiss babies; candidates need to be able to amuse their supporters with sing and dance routines. In addition, candidates need to impress people not just with their ability to deliver rousing speeches, but also in the ability of their other family members to rally support for them. Campaign sorties have become family affairs, where the candidates are accompanied by partners, children, grandchildren, etc. aside from non-family members.

Politics is a strange arena where enemies become instant friends, all for the sake of such "heavy" concepts as statesmanship and embracing political diversity. Even stranger is how the closest of friends instantly become sworn enemies, all because of different party affiliations or differing political platforms. Wondrously, staunch supporters and allies often become the worst political mudslingers, especially in cases where one of them gets caught red handed or most likely didn't get the fair end of a deal.

Politics is an arena of issues, not relationships. You build relationships based on how beneficial they will be to your political career, not on how you are able to sustain them with genuine concern and caring for the other. Once your political comrade becomes a detriment to your stable political standing, the best recourse is always to cut quick and cut clean. Better to mitigate your losses now than to contemplate having no gains of any kind in the future.

It's really funny how perfectly sane people want to get into politics. Yes, they wish to institute changes, yes, they believe they have the ability to lead, and yes, they have the machinery and a whole arsenal of support. Can't they just help society without being in position? Why bother to get a special license plate when your present one very well enables you to blend in and be with more people? Being in a political position only gives you perks, but that's all they are. Why should the choice to help always be accompanied by privileges? Is that the real spirit of helping?

A great political leader acknowledges that his loyalty lies in those that have catapulted him into office. It is not in those he owes political debts to nor in those he shares party affiliations with. He must never forget that being in a position is an opportunity to serve, not to be bowed down to.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What are the most common pitfalls of initially well-meaning politicians?
2. Is there a particular political figure you admire? Be able to talk about this person in class.
3. Would you run for political office, if given the chance? Why or why not?
4. Why is it often very difficult to remain honest in politics? Be as specific as you need to be.
5. Would you break up a long-standing friendship you share with somebody just because of political diversity? What would you do to maintain the friendship and still have a good image for yourself?