



Trump and seeing the true problem

As Donald Trump gets impeached for the second time, there is some cross party support for the fact that his incitement to violence on the day of the mob invasion of the Capitol was beyond the pale.

Whether following this path is politically wise, or whether it gives more oxygen to the Trumpian view of being at the wrong end of a witch-hunt, I do not quite know. What I do think people need to be careful of is that in emphasising the riot, we miss the deeper problem. There can be an attitude that goes, "The other stuff he did was okay; it was only inciting a riot that was the problem."

In this case, what I think is much more insidious for the future of American democracy is the constant drip-drip of assertion that the election was rigged or stolen.

Republicans have come out in droves to attack Trump for inciting the riot, but not many have come out to say that the whole, "The election was rigged", thing was lies. And yet, the smears on the electoral process have been absolutely constant, even as no evidence has ever come out on this, so that polls now show that fewer than half of people who voted Republican believe that Joe Biden won the Presidential Election.

It is an absolutely mind-boggling statistic. After the EU Referendum campaign, which was not exactly a gentle one, there may have been an issue about the exact funding of part of the Vote Leave campaign, but

no one seriously doubted that the voting was accurate. No one denied that more people voted to leave Europe than to stay in. Nor would anyone give credence to someone who just said the count was wrong.

Somehow, America has got itself into a place where the lie, for a truth that doesn't fit, is acceptable, and the norm, for a great chunk of society.

Years ago, there was an issue about Gambling as Gordon Brown introduced a Gaming Act that liberalised the industry.

The contention, especially among the Church, was that this was not ideal, but the real problem was the so-called 'Super Casino' idea, where a resort such as Blackpool was destined to become the Atlantic City of England's North West. And so we stuck our oar in and stopped the Super Casino.

We chose the wrong battle. The problem gamblers have been caused by all the other things in the bill: the rise in online gaming, the opening up of advertising and sponsorship, and the fixed odds betting terminals in High Street bookmakers. Super casinos were an iconic aspect of the bill, but not so central: in focussing on them, we missed the deeper issue.

I fear the riot on the Capitol, while wrong, will distract America from the bigger problem that Trump presented, and presented all along. It was an iconic horror, but there is a deeper sickness.

Jan 2021 Thought. for the Train is a short column by the Rev'd Robert Stanier, vicar of St Andrew and St Mark, Surbiton, for people to read on the train. You can also read "Thought for the Train" at www.surbitonchurch.org.uk.