



A return of optimism in America?

Description

American journalists share their thoughts at the CORIM State of America video-conference

By **Jonathan James Williams**

What is America? Besides being a significant player on the world stage, how does the ship of state govern itself after four years of Trump administration? America may be at odds with itself, but what are the consequences for Canada and Canadians?

Hosted by **Tom Creary**, senior consultant in U.S.-Canada cross-border business development, a trifecta of well-renowned American journalists shared their thoughts and answered some questions and concerns during the **CORIM State of America video-conference** on March 11, 2021. The participants gave some optimistic viewpoints concerning a new American prospect with a social understanding based on science.

Karen Tumulty, National Affairs columnist of *The Washington Post*, **Gerald Seib**, executive editor of the Washington bureau of the *Wall Street Journal* and **David Scribman**, former executive editor of the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, columnist for the *Globe and Mail* and McGill University professor of American politics in Montreal, were present for the question period.

The take-outs



Karen Tumulty – Image: Twitter

Presently we are witnessing a new administration working to shift the nation from right to left, from starboard to port in marine terms. But will the ship heave, or will the hull crack? President Biden has proclaimed and often repeated that he is hoping and calling for a time for unity, not just to fight an out-of-control virus but also to address racial differences and tense sociological disarray.

A definite victory for the President is March's passage of a \$1400 relief payment to families and individuals as apart of his COVID economic package of \$1.9 trillion. The President also promised the American people 100 million vaccines in his first 100 days in office, fulfilling his promise.

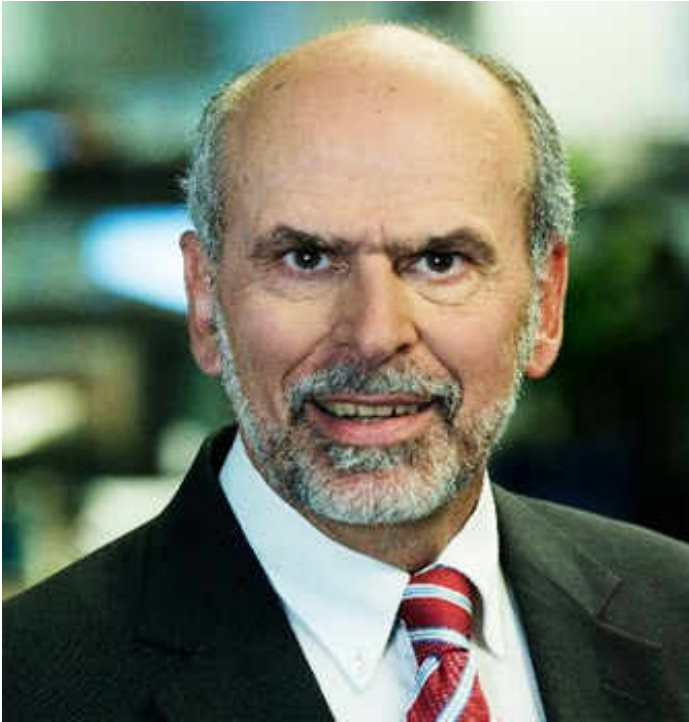
There are growing immigration issues at the southern border, and the Biden administration is criticized for allowing unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers.

General sentiments and bipartisanship

When asked about the general sentiments in Washington, post-Trump era, Tumulty explained that the current vaccine rollout was a positive aspect and that America is "poised for a solid economic recovery." She also went on to say that, "We had seen Joe Biden take office to bring back bipartisanship; we did see this week that he passed this massive economic package, but he did not get a single Republican vote for it."

There was no single vote of approval from Republicans in the House of Representatives or the Senate. She clarified that public opinion shows that only 45% of Republicans favoured the bill and 70% of Democrats approved it. Her thoughts were that the government is not tinkering with the economy through the Federal Reserve and that they are stepping back into a role that we have not seen in decades.

A progressive government



Gerald Seib – Image: Everypedia

Seib specified Washington’s current state as having “big moments” regarding the stimulus package. There will be money for vaccination distribution, continued testing and schools reopening, all restoring America’s confidence in its government and “shows that this White House knows how to get things done.” He described it as a negative aspect that the House of Representatives and the Senate cannot reach any meaningful bipartisanship. Seib also thinks that flooding the economy with such a large amount of money might spark inflation renewal.

Scribman’s thoughts were that vaccinations remain paramount. The general outtake was that America is under a one-party rule and that the Biden economic relief plan passed with single-party votes. On the topic of whether or not the bill has transformed American society, he divulged that, “anytime an American family gets a check for \$5400, it will change their lives.”

A world without Trump

Creary then went on to talk about the state of Washington since the departure of the former president. “Is it quieter?”

Tumulty said that Donald Trump still looms in the White House, the Senate and the House of Representatives. Commenting that there are still many corrosive forces lingering in support of conspiracy theories, she pointed to the influence of QAnon, a group advancing unfounded conspiracy theories where nothing is proven, and everything is absorbed.

... [if the current administration] can’t get Republican support, the Democrats will go out to sell their newly passed bill to the American public.

Karen Tumulty

Seib said that the presence of Trump is still “a shadow over the current president.” With several senators still in

favour of the former President, even the general public can attest to his lingering presence. Seib also cited that Trump might have receded a bit, but “Trumpism is still very much alive.” Whether or not it will continue remains to be seen. His thoughts were that “people are deathly afraid of compromising with the Biden administration because they know they’ll be attacked by Donald Trump.”

Tumulty said that if the current administration “can’t get Republican support, the Democrats will go out to sell their newly passed bill to the American public.” The Biden administration has been doing just that this week in hopes of national support.

The economy

Creary later went on to discuss the state of the economy with the participants. With an economic relief package delivered to so many individuals and families, what would be the general outcome economically for families and individuals?

‘People want freedom from this pandemic. People don’t want to be partisans just yet. They want to get back to their lives.’

David Scribman

Seib commented that money given by the government has an opportunity to be put back into the economy. Consumers now have monetary means, which would mean spending and putting more back into the system. Individuals and families can potentially spend it on various services provided to the general public, helping many sectors contribute to the recovery. He also said that it seemed half promising in the first six months, yet there might be many uncertainties after the first part of the year.

The division in the country is quite real



David Scribman – Image: Globe and Mail



Asked by Creary if any participants felt that, after a disastrous election provoking many indecencies, the country has moved to a division stage?

Tumulty replied that, yes, division in the country is quite real. He (Biden) thinks people seek deliverance from this pandemic and they don't want partisanship just yet. They want to get back to their everyday lives first.

Seib said that Democrats feel that they do not need bipartisanship and can get public support for their bills.

Scribman had his thoughts, saying, "People want freedom from this pandemic. People don't want to be partisans just yet. They want to get back to their lives."

We have already seen a foreseeable element in the Capitol insurrection, which proved to be horrifying to many. Creary mentioned a new stage of division and that internal war is possible while choosing sides.

Tumulty expressed her feelings saying that you see it in things that should not be political –commenting on the use of masks, as an example. Governors are moving more quickly than health authorities would like while reopening the economy.

Seib made his thoughts clear in saying that he is of two minds on this subject. On the one hand, he thinks the division is profound. The outrage machine, social media, the cable talk shows, and the political money machine raise evermore money by creating evermore political outrage. Subsequently, his thoughts were that people are angry, not just because of policy differences but because of cultural differences. He referred to the Black Lives Matter movement, recent Asian-Hate crimes, and gender differences.

Conspiracies

Creary moved on to the subject of conspiracy thinking and whether it has changed the political landscape.

'I think that as the anger goes down, the conspiracy-mongering might go down as well. Maybe those two things are directly related.'

Gerald Seib

Seib explained that the QAnon supporters are beginning to fall away. Doubters of the crusade are beginning to believe that the movement's supporters indeed took them and that eventually, the truth wins out. Speaking in terms, "I think that as the anger goes down, the conspiracy-mongering might go down as well. Maybe those two things are directly related."

Tumulty spoke of Ron Johnson, a senator from Wisconsin. Her thoughts were that if he decides to run for office again, he would be the only Republican incumbent defending a seat formerly won by Joe Biden. She also points out that he is a "full conspiracy Trumper" and believes that left-wing saboteurs caused the Capitol riots. Tumulty mentioned Representative Liz Cheney who favoured the former President's impeachment and denounced him for the riot on January 6. Since then, she has been condemned by the Republican Party and unfounded conspiracy claims continue to strive in the House and the Senate.

The trifecta of journalists informatively gave their sentiments on a brighter America. With more positive aspects than negative, perhaps we are witnessing a nation's healing while combating its differences. Canada and Canadians can undoubtedly learn from these events.

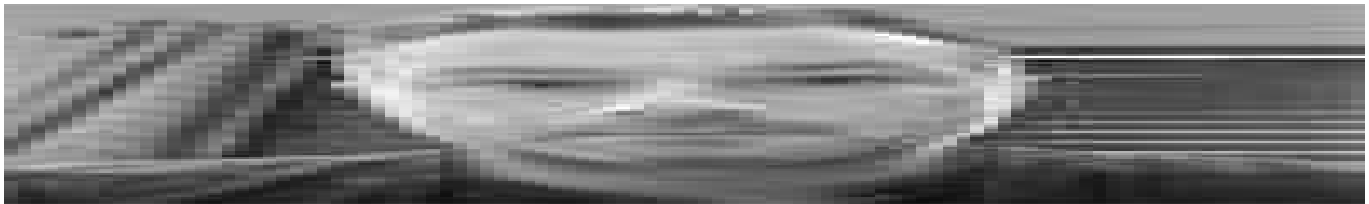
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Jonathan Williams is interested in politics and current affairs. Graduating in Social Sciences and Police Technology, he worked in the mental health field for 20 years, establishing connections with special needs clientele and defining their specific needs based on human and behavioural interaction. A freelance writer, he is looking to break into the business and expand his horizons. He is a member of the Quebec Federation of Writers.



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