

THE STATE OF THINGS

As we turn from a year of mostly disaster to one we have reason to hope will be less disastrous, we might evaluate it now. After all it is history, though of the recent kind.

Not all that went wrong was caused during 2020. *The groundwork was set in 2016, when the worst President in history was elected.* Most of us knew that immediately, though we could not know just how unimaginably bad that could be. Outrageously wrong acts, policies, and words, mostly false, piled so high that they were hard to count.

Then came a pandemic, when we needed a leader with wisdom and compassion, and we didn't have one. The disease was no one's fault, not even Trump's, but his deplorably bad leadership made it far worse than it should have been.

Our country's response was not just Trump's fault. Without Presidential direction, and despite misdirection, we should have known who to listen to, and taken responsibility to follow sound advice, but a large number did not, and still do not. They, too share the blame. They are part of the reason we could not save a large portion of well over 300,000 lives.

A majority of the American people are sensible and compassionate human beings. We did, in the 11th month, save our democracy, and we did establish once again that our nation should serve us all, equally. We reaffirmed that the government we elect should be FOR the people.

We have yet to save the irrational and ill-motivated people among us from their own destructive, divisive obsessions. Perhaps, in time, we will.

THE STATE OF THE SHMOOZEZONE

Although in the larger public sphere, our freedoms are still intact despite the efforts of authoritarians, and freedom of expression is claimed as a value even by those who would misuse it, it seems to be an endangered principle here on this site. Clearly it is not a matter of prudishness or objection to the harshness of language, but more about who the speech is directed toward.

It has been wisely observed that *when some of us are not free, then none of us truly are free.* When an authority can decide who can speak and who cannot, we are speaking by permission, not by right.

Naturally there are limits to any right, when it is used to cause an actual danger to others. Incitement to violence or prejudice, or misinformation about public safety may be examples. But that leaves a broad range of expression, whether or not it is offensive to some, that should not be infringed.

It has also been said that *power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.* We may well have a classic example of that truth right under our noses.

-cosmicrat 1/1/2021