



Editors' Page

The Obama Era or is it something finer?

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The very odd American idea that one can meaningfully take the pulse of a new presidential administration in its first 100 days actually harkens back to the first term of Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In those days, presidents were inaugurated in March, Congress didn't convene until December, and nothing much was expected of either during that first interim.

But Roosevelt changed all that. We the Great Depression just beginning to show its teeth, he called Congress into session just days after his inaugural address and kept them there for exactly 100 days. During that period, 15 extraordinary pieces of legislation were enacted. Some failed; others were struck down by the Supreme Court; but several laid the foundations for the liberal American "New Deal". Ever since, presidents have been challenged (mostly by the media) to come up to that extraordinary standard. Most don't. And, the criterion itself is dated and largely irrelevant to politics in our day.

Still, pundits couldn't resist. And many rightly proclaimed Obama's first 100 days the most productive (and predictive) since FDR's 1932 *tour de force*.

Barack Obama outlined sweeping reforms of legislation affecting health care, environment and climate, energy, education, and relations with the global community. His now celebrated "Cairo speech" heralded a new era in US-Muslim relations.

As this issue goes to press, we pass the six-month mark of the Obama presidency. The forces of opposition have assembled (many within the president's own party). And so the pundits descend in sham puzzlement. Is the Obama Era over before it starts?

Let's consider an alternative scenario. The November 2008 US elections did not just initiate the Obama Era, they brought a deeper dynamic into focus.

Cultures do evolve; and our global culture might just be at the evolutionary crossroads. That we've been through a difficult and discouraging period cannot be denied. But are we now at the threshold of something entirely different, something finer?

What should we expect? The big struggles (health, education, eco and climate, the opening to the Islamic world, and the US and the world) are underway. That alone tells us that a new era may be

beginning, not the Obama Era but the era in which a new understanding of the common good began to be born.

Are we on the threshold of a new progressive opening? This is a theme *Insight* will continue to explore, beginning with Kamran Mofid's piece in this issue.

In the October issue, we'll offer the 2009 Globalization for the Common Good Declaration (Chicago) and explore a number of related issues.

Here at *Insight*, we are committed to the view that a major cultural-evolutionary values shift is underway. We'll keep you informed.

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MEMORIALS

The interreligious world has lost two stalwarts with the early June deaths of Ewert Cousins and Thomas Berry.

Ewert Cousins was a contributor to *Insight*. He had also been an occasional lecturer at Common Ground. Above all, his was a clarion voice for interreligious inquiry, understanding, and dialogue. Ewert Cousins was the first and the most eloquent articulatory of the idea that our own age marked the opening of the Second Axial Age. The first (in the first millennium BCE) had brought individual consciousness into play in human spirituality. The second made the conscious field global. Ewert was a giant. He is already missed.

Thomas Berry was a champion of Earth and all life. As a self-identified "geologist", Thomas emerged as the most influential ecological voice of the century. Working in close cooperation with seminal figures including Mary Evelyn Tucker, John Grim, and Brian Swimme, Thomas articulated an exquisite vision of the human relationship to the Earth. Perhaps the most important dimension of the teaching of Thomas Berry found expression in his celebration of indigenous wisdom.

Thomas and Ewert were friends. And they were friends of ours. We'll remember them thoughtfully and prayerfully.