

The Prize,

I didn't want to do this. I didn't want to offer my opinions about the recent awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Barack Obama. It's not an event that I sit around thinking about. I do not review the candidates in each field and choose my favorites. I don't make bets and I don't discuss the awards ceremony with friends and family. This is not the Oscars or baseball's MVP races. And I really don't care what five obscure Norwegians think about anything. Besides, I've always found it supremely ironic that the guy who invented dynamite should slap his name on a Peace Prize. Yeah, I know, he developed his explosive for blasting away at rock. It's not his fault that various nations and militaries have used it to kill untold millions. I didn't say it's wrong, just ironic.

But here's what I think anyway. I think the President should have respectfully declined. I think he should have made one of his marvelous speeches about how much he appreciates the vote of confidence and how well he understands the rest of the world's need to welcome a reasoning president leading a less violent America. I wish he had thanked the electors and then suggested a few other candidates who might be ahead of him in the Peace Prize line, the Hunger Project for instance.

It's clear that the Nobel folks were expressing the enormous relief that the world felt when the citizens of the United States roundly rejected eight years of righteous bullying. Eight years in which it was not ridiculous to wonder if your country might be the next to fall under the March of Democracy. They were saying, in their quaint way, "Nice going U.S. We are going to breathe a lot easier. We really like the way your president thinks." I get it. But if that was their message they should have awarded the Prize to the American public or at least the ones who voted for Obama. The Committee should be thanking the 69.5 million of us who turned the trick. Let's see now, 1.4 million dollars divided by the number of Obama voters would come to about twenty one cents apiece. In Chicago we used to get paid a lot more than that to vote...just kidding.

I guess the problem I have with the vote is that it strikes me as merely a slap to the man who left office and a pat on the back to the new guy, hardly heroic stuff. Of course, this could signal a new era in Nobel voting.

This could be the beginning of a stretch where the Committee awards the prize based on how various national elections turn out. This might be the way that Norwegians can let the world know how they would have voted if they lived in a country that had some influence in the world. That would be a good thing for the citizens of that lovely land. It's high time that folks in New York and San Diego and Caledonia and Houston are saying, "So that's what they think in Batsfjord."

I suppose another benefit of the most recent Peace Prize is that it gives both Lefties and Righties something to complain about. Pundits are actually agreeing with each other (don't tell them, they'll stop). That's important in these times of contentious conversation, these days when either side is willing to denounce anything from the other. Lefties are angry because they are still feeling slighted that Leon Trotsky and Studs Terkel never won. Righties simply can't believe there's a Peace Prize in the first place. But they both agree, for whatever reason that Barack should not have a new 1.4 million to give away. That's cool. And here I am concurring with all of them; a first!

So I guess it's not such a bad deal after all. The rest of the world got to know what Thorbjorn, Kaci, Inger-Marie, Sissel and Agot (the five people on the Nobel Committee) think. Americans who voted for the President got a hearty handshake of gratitude. Blue and Red loyalists have something to agree on and Norway is having its week in the international sun just as the long winter is settling in. I just wish the Prize had gone to someone who has already done what the President has yet to do.