



The Return of the Clintons

by Doug Stout

One of the major mistakes this President has made is he never really made the psychological leap from partisan leader of the Democrat Party to the unifying figure of “The President of the United States” and (whether he likes it or not) the role of “Leader of the Free World.” In the months immediately prior to an election, the President usually makes a temporary transition to be somewhat more of a political partisan. Some Presidents do it more deftly and more subtlety than others. Unfortunately, this President does not have a transition to make to “campaign mode.” He has branded the other party and their supporters, and even their sympathetic news outlets, as a major part of the problem from the earliest days of his Administration. Rather than ending the political bickering as he alluded to during the campaign, the President has escalated it to a new level of intensity.

So now the President is on the campaign trail, trying to visit all of his Democrat allies who appear to be in trouble in November, which means he has a lot of visiting to do. Vice President Joe Biden is also out on the campaign trail. We have the first Vice President with a PG-13 rating on his speech content. His security detail should be looking at IDs at the door, not just for security reasons, but to make sure that there are not any children present. I realize that part of his demeanor is his idea that he is an “average Joe,” but an “average Joe” should know that there is a time and a place for rough language. Those times and those places are generally not a part of the public schedule for the Vice President of the United States.

In today’s political climate, I am reminded of one of the campaign jokes told by former Majority Leader of the Senate and Presidential candidate Bob Dole. He used to tell friendly candidates that he would come to their states to “campaign for them...or campaign against them...whichever they thought would do them the most good.” It is an approach the current Administration might do well to keep in mind. With the President’s approval ratings consistently below 50 percent, a visit from him has some mixed blessings to it.

When United States Senator Blanche Lincoln was in imminent danger of being defeated in the Arkansas primary for her Senate seat, it was not President Obama who stepped in to save the day.¹ It was none other than former President Bill Clinton, who has apparently “turned the tide” and completed his mission to rebuild the nation of Haiti already and is looking for new challenges. It might be wise for the current President to remember another old adage, “keep your friends close and your enemies closer.”

It is difficult to figure out what the Clintons are up to these days. Could it be that it has occurred to them that there is a Presidential election in 2012 and the process really starts as early as this January? Should the Obama Administration be concerned that Bill Clinton recently endorsed Democrat United States Senate candidate Andrew Romanoff, after the Democratic National Committee had already endorsed his opponent Michael Bennet?² Romanoff is the candidate who the Administration allegedly tried very hard to talk out of running for the seat against Bennet. So it would appear that there is still a “Clinton camp” and an “Obama camp” in the Democrat party and that does not bode well for an uncontested primary for the Democrat Presidential nomination in 2012.

We should all be used to the fact by now that Vice President Joe Biden has a tendency to go off script and say things that have not been vetted by anyone, or even seemingly thought through, even by the Vice President himself. However, the same can’t be said of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton. She is a very calculating politician, who generally knows exactly what she is saying and the impact that it is likely to

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have when she says it. She seldom says something significant without an underlying purpose. So what are we to make of her speech in Ecuador, where she announced a major public policy move, which had very little to do with her own portfolio of Secretary of State? She announced on foreign soil that the United States Justice Department was going to sue the State of Arizona over its recent measures to try to limit the explosion of illegal immigration that is overwhelming the state.³

Now, I am not focusing on the merits of that decision. I want you to think about the politics of what occurred. Hillary Clinton, the Secretary of State, announced a major and controversial decision, involving a Presidential-level decision to use the United States Department of Justice to sue a state government, while on foreign soil. Since there was no immediate response by the White House, it would appear that they may have been taken by surprise. Could that really be the case? The President had met with Arizona Governor Jan Brewer at the White House only a couple of weeks before. The Governor had come away from the meeting, sounding optimistic that the Administration and the state could find a way to work together on the issue.⁴ Some of the President's most liberal allies were loudly urging him to instruct the Justice Department to strike against the policies of the Arizona Legislature. He had asked the Justice Department to consider a challenge.⁵ Then, suddenly, the Secretary of State, his former political nemesis, announces the Justice Department is going to file suit. This forced the President to either confirm he intended to challenge the Arizona law, when polls show the law has the support of a majority of Americans, or have him directly confront his own Secretary of State publicly on the issue and further infuriate his political left.

It certainly looks like Hillary Clinton boxed him in. It also appears that former President Clinton may be a more popular figure than President Obama — a trend that is likely to expand dramatically if the Democrats suffer severe losses in the November elections, and especially if some Democrats who are at risk are saved through the personal assistance of Bill Clinton. The current President seems to be digging a lot of holes to step in. We have not seen this sort of political turmoil in the White House since the memorable days of Jimmy Carter. In those days we had “national malaise” and odd stories of “killer rabbits.” Now we have “beer summits” and the open cynicism of a Presidential Chief of Staff who urges a strategy of “never letting a good crisis go to waste.” That may explain a Presidential speech about the environmental crisis of the Gulf of Mexico oil spill that morphed into a political pitch to pass cap-and-trade legislation, which would serve to hammer our already struggling economy and has nothing to do in the short term with the Gulf Coast response. It was an incredibly cynical strategy and one which only served to damage the President's credibility and effectiveness.

The Administration is in trouble; much more importantly, America is facing severe challenges. The first step to recovery would be to repudiate in November's elections the out-of-control deficit spending and out-of-step agenda of the United States Congress. The second step has to be to build a consensus in our country to actually start to solve our nation's problems. If that does not happen soon, don't be surprised if you see a lot more of the Clintons next year.

Endnotes:

¹Suzi Parker, “Bill Clinton Calls Arkansas Sen. Blanche Lincoln's Opponent a Union Tool,” *Politics Daily*, May 28, 2010, <<http://www.politicsdaily.com/2010/05/28/bill-clinton-calls-arkansas-sen-blanche-lincolns-opponent-a-un/>> (July 9, 2010).

²Robert Hendin, “Bill Clinton Endorses Andrew Romanoff in Colorado Primary Race,” *CBS News*, June 29, 2010, <http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20009204-503544.html> (July 9, 2010).

³Brian Montopoli, “Senior Official: Obama Administration Will Challenge Arizona Immigration Law,” June 18, 2010, <http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20008171-503544.html>, (July 9, 2010).

⁴Brian Montopoli, “Arizona Governor Jan Brewer “Encouraged” by Obama Meeting,” *CBS News*, June 3, 2010, <http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-503544_162-20006744-503544.html> (July 9, 2010).

⁵Ibid.

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