

P-BOB MARCHES ON

Stephen L. Bakke – March 23, 2009

A political cartoon, “Mallard Fillmore”, recently showed the main character watching a TV report which states: “Ninety-two percent of Obama supporters surveyed favor an executive order making ‘everything better right now’”. So go the trials of a messiah.

“Calm is not in itself a leadership quality. Containing emotions is important, but calm is no substitute for courage, wisdom or imagination. Calm can just as easily be an indication of arrogance as of nervy self control, of aloofness as of coolness under fire.” - Rich Lowry

Where Did I Leave Off Last Time?

Oh yeah! Something about the many appointments and all their creative ways to be a pain in the ass for P-POb. It seems a bit trivial but I can't help “piling on”. Did you read about the choice for “Urban Czar” – whatever that is? P-BOB's appointee, Adolpho Carrion, as Bronx borough president, “often received contributions just before and after he sponsored money for projects or improved important zoning changes,” reported the New York Daily News.

Previously I reported on Charles “Chas” Freeman's appointment as director of the National Intelligence Council. Even though not widely reported, except right here, he had no intelligence experience, and a long standing reputation as outspokenly anti-Israel and head of the Middle East Policy Council, a lobbying group funded chiefly by Saudia Arabia. He's also worked for organizations funded by the Chinese government. Good choice – head of intelligence with significant previous employment by at least two unfriendly foreign autocracies. Now there's a well-balanced resume and a picture of objectivity! What am I missing? But Chas withdrew from consideration in March. So no big deal? Yes – big deal! Here's what P-BOB's first choice for this very important position had to say in his withdrawal statement: “The tactics of the Israel lobby plumb the depths of dishonor and indecency and include character assassination, selective misquotation, the willful distortion of the record, the fabrication of his falsehoods, and the utter disregard for the truth”. Now there's a class act! I should add that there was general concern even among many of the most liberal members of congress that Chas's former outspokenness and past experience was something that they didn't want to be close to. But our president did!

Many/some conservatives were pleased when the president selected Admiral Dennis Blair to be the Director of National Intelligence. Good background in the military, but no intelligence experience. But does his selection of Mr. Freeman raise any questions of his worthiness and objectivity. And there's more. Another of Blair's appointees was naming former CIA Director John Deutch to a panel to review spy satellite programs. Mr. Deutch lost his job AND HIS SECURITY CLEARANCES in 1996 when agency officials discovered he was storing classified materials on his home computers, despite repeated warnings they could be intercepted via the Internet. An excellent reporter and commentator, Jack Kelly, stated recently that “we have a director of National Intelligence with no intelligence experience and demonstrably poor

judgment, and a CIA director, Leon Panetta, who also has no intelligence experience. There are places where on the job training is not appropriate.”

My president is, I hope, slowly realizing that his idealism, sweeping rhetoric, and grand declarations don't go far in the real world – even if your value is enhanced by a TOTUS (that's short for “Teleprompter of the United States” as coined by the not always diplomatic Rushbo)

Tiny Tim

We can't stop talking about everyone's favorite “empty suit”, Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner – whom I choose to label, from time to time in the service of efficiency and brevity, as “T-Sec”. So P-BOB chose T-Sec to lift us out of peril, and now while at the TOTUS, P-BOB reassures us that T-Sec is doing a great job while remaining calm and steady throughout. Even HOTUS and SOTUS (House of the United States and Senate of the United States) seem generally uncomfortable with T-Sec. Jointly, HOTUS and SOTUS could be referred to as COTUS (Congress of the United States). Will we soon introduce T-Sec2 into the mix? More on Tiny Tim further in this “Rant”.

Where's the Beef?

While the real priority for solving the economic problems lingers, the administration is diluting the potential impact of the proper actions by stating that the only real solution includes a combination of health care reform, education legislation, and clean energy/environmental legislation. They really are taking Rahm's advice seriously, i.e. taking advantage of a crisis to start things moving on all liberal legislation. They should be focused on the banking/credit crisis by doing the right things like permitting bankruptcies, providing limited government credit guarantees, etc. which would require much less certainty of taxpayer burden and a quicker solution in the long run. But they spend our congress's time grandstanding about a symbolically important, but relatively immaterial AIG bonus controversy.

Why not the path of guarantees and market force bankruptcies? Because, I believe, that would limit the level of government involvement which flies in the face of the inherent liberal belief that government should “push the buttons and turn the dials” of our economy and all aspects of our society. If you control the funds with which businesses operate, i.e. bailout and stimulus dollars, you control the entities. That's an unspoken goal of liberal legislators and administrators.

Bonuses on Parade

Of course the public should be outraged about the AIG bonus issue. And this fire caught on in congress. I'm disappointed too, but congress must prioritize their efforts. Have staffers look into it if they must – or the Justice Department. But they spent much more time and effort going back and forth on the ultimate House bill to tax the bonuses than they did considering and debating about spending trillions in budget, stimulus and bailout bills. They didn't even give the members time to read the details of the spending bills – remember? Such sloppiness leads to developments such as those surrounding the AIG bonuses.

Not only was the possibility of AIG bonuses NOT an oversight, but the P-BOB stimulus package expressly included language to protect “any bonus payment required to be paid pursuant to a written employment contract executed on or before February 11, 2009”. They knew what they were doing. Their screams of outrage merely are meant to drown out the evidence of their sloppiness and confusion.

Who are the bad actors here? Senator Dodd was the largest recipient of AIG executives’ political contributions in the Senate. He originally told the public that he had no idea who inserted that language about bonuses. Then he had to backpedal and admit that he himself submitted the language at the request of the administration’s Treasury Department. And T-Sec also has changed his tune on when he knew about the bonus provisions and imminent payments. At first saying he hadn’t learned of the bonus provision until March 10, he told CNN last week that he did talk to Sen. Dodd about including the provision in the stimulus bill which Congress passed on February 14th. Washington Post reporter David Cho and Michael Shear wrote on March 19, “Federal Reserve officials knew for months about the bonuses at American International Group, but failed to tell the Obama administration.” Who was the Fed official most intimately involved in the original bailout of AIG? T-Sec, of course. Jack Kelly wrote that: “How likely is it the Fed President Timothy Geithner kept this information from Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner?”

Barney Frank was at his “best” last week as well. His outrage almost “dampened” the floor of HOTUS. But I’ve dealt with him enough in my commentary about the financial/housing crisis which I wrote months ago – look there. I will only briefly quote him on NBC last week: “Forget about the legal matter here for a second. These bonuses are going to people who screwed this thing up enormously, who made terrible decisions”. If that is his standard, how can he accept a congressional pay raise considering his central role in screwing up the handling of Fannie and Freddie, when regulators, John McCain, and others tried to warn the House about the potential crisis on the horizon. He makes my blood boil.

P-BOB, in his many continuous “campaign” appearances first fanned the flame of the fire by his outrage and encouragement of congressional action against AIG bonus recipients. He expressed outrage but was careful not to say when he learned of the bonuses. And now, over the weekend, even he expressed his concern that the HOTUS bill to tax AIG bonuses is most likely unconstitutional. (Oh I love the feel of whiplash, don’t you?) But what he has now realized? As Rep. Dan Lungren, R-Calif., noted in on the floor of the House before his “nay” vote last week: “There is something called a bill of attainder. You can’t punish a group because you don’t like them. You can’t have them treated more onerously than somebody else without a trial.” It’s the law of our land and our impetuous new president is learning, hopefully, a little more about reality each day. He still thinks like a community activist, organizer, and low level legislator where there is very little thought of accountability and outcomes.

If AIG and Liddy can be brought to task for mistakes, why not P-BOB, T-Sec and COTUS? If they truly believe that a “screw-up” shouldn’t be subsidized by taxpayers, and that all in important positions should be accountable, as expressed so strongly by the president, then how about a punitive tax on all in Congress, treasury officials and the president?

More soon.

More comments will follow on important topics such as health care reform, and personal insights as our President battles through tough territory. As I said in my December 2008 “essay” on liberals and conservatives, “I want to be on record joining with other conservatives in uniting behind our new President. We must show that we will act more respectfully than liberals did during George W. Bush’s presidency. Such treatment was beyond mere disagreement and criticism. It was undeserved and unprecedented. We who oppose many of Barack Obama’s policies will, I believe, act in accordance with conservative values of decency, while respectfully continuing to oppose him when we disagree”. As Dennis Prager said on election night: “I did not vote for him. I did not want him to be President. But as of January 20, 2009, he will be my President.” I agree, and I’m also solidly part of the “loyal opposition”, and will act accordingly.

I extend thanks, as always, to the many writers, commentators, researchers, and others, from both political extremes, whose hard work helps me greatly. They gather details and individually present so much information. About all I do is gather, organize, summarize, and then attempt to fill in with additional comments – commonly referred to as my frequent “RANTS”. Someone recently commented to me that it’s no wonder I have these ideas – I obviously don’t pay attention to both sides of the arguments. I assure you that I approach issues from multiple angles. While I have become a conservative, I still read and evaluate more liberal columns, books, commentary, and web sites than Al Franken, Al Gore, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Chuck Schumer, NancyPelosi, and HarryReid COMBINED! Maybe I could even throw in a couple more names for good measure.