

AFTER LESS THAN A MONTH.....

Stephen L. Bakke – February 9, 2009

President Barack Obama's first activities as our President have strongly sent the message that Democrats are back in power and their friends will be rewarded. It should not be a surprise because after all, he emphatically declared that "We Won". That's politics. But what happened to the post-partisan leadership we heard so much about. And what happened to the new policy of transparency and ridding country of the conservative/Republican "culture of corruption"? Did all of that get lost in his zeal to flex his muscles and reward his prominent supporters?

One of the President's declarations was that he denounced the influence of lobbyists and said they would have no place in his administration. Yet he found it necessary to ask for exceptions to this policy for his Deputy Secretary of Defense, his Health and Human Services Secretary, and his Agriculture Secretary.

Writer and commentator Mark Steyn recently wrote a scathing commentary/satire of the first few weeks of the administration: First, quoting Susan Sarandon, he recalls her statement that "He (Obama) is a community organizer like Jesus was, and now we're a community, and he can organize us." Steyn went on to add: "So how's that going? Jesus took a handful of loaves and two fish and fed 5,000 people. Barack wants to take a trillion pieces of pork and feed it to a handful of Democratic Party interest groups. Jesus picked twelve disciples. Barack seems to have gone more for one of those "Dirty Dozen" caper-movie lineups, where the mission is so perilous and so audacious that only the skuzziest lowlifes recruited from every waterfront dive have any chance of pulling it off.....A president doesn't have to walk on water. But he does have to choose the right crew for the ship, especially if he's planning on spending most of his time at the captain's table, schmoozing the celebrity guests with a lot of deep thoughts about 'hope' and 'change'". Ouch!

Jack Kelly recently joked that when Democrats spoke of a "culture of corruption" in Washington, little did we realize that it wasn't a criticism – rather, it was a campaign promise. In just a very few weeks, more "wanna be" senior officials have suffered from an ethical taint than in any previous administration.

- Former Senator Thomas Daschle, withdrew from his nomination as Secretary of Health and Human Services after it was learned that he owed about \$142,000 in taxes for underreporting his income in just the last couple of years.
- Timothy Geithner was confirmed as Treasury Secretary despite his failure to pay his self employment taxes for four years while working for the International Monetary Fund.

- Nancy Killefer, President Obama’s selection for a new cabinet level job of Chief Compliance Officer, withdrew from consideration when it was revealed that the District of Columbia had placed a lien on her “mansion” for failure to pay unemployment compensation tax for a household employee.
- Representative Hilda Solis, the nominee for Secretary of Labor, apparently violated House rules by failing to disclose she was an officer of a group lobbying Congress.
- Eric Hold was confirmed as U.S. Attorney General despite having circumvented Justice Department rules to obtain a pardon for fugitive financier Marc Rich during the last days of the Clinton administration, when he was Deputy Attorney General. In 2002, the House Government Operations Committee described Mr. Holder’s behavior in the Rich pardon as “unconscionable”.
- Way back before the inauguration, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson withdrew as the nominee for Secretary of Commerce when it was disclosed the FBI was investigating him in connection with a “pay to play” scandal.
- Governor Richardson is thought by some to have been President Obama’s second choice for the Commerce post behind Penny Pritzker, his campaign finance chairman. Ms Pritzker pioneered what have been described as the “nefarious instruments” at her now defunct Superior Bank outside of Chicago.
- Still trying to fill the Commerce post, the President has now chosen Republican Senator Judd Gregg for his Cabinet. Then we learned that Mr. Gregg’s former legislative director was tangentially involved in the Jack Abramoff scandal.
- A few days ago, Ron Sims was chosen to be Deputy Secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. However, as a County Executive in Washington state, Mr. Sims was fined \$124,000 for “blatant” violations of Washington state’s State Public Records Act for failure to release documents with regard to financing the Seahawks stadium. And last month the Washington state supreme court said the fine should now be increased.

Has Congress turned a blind eye to much of this? If so, is it because so many of their members have been mentioned in similar “entanglements” in recent months – witness Barney Frank, Chris Dodd, Charles Rangel, et. al.?

Remember Sarah Palin, and the accusations about a lack of competent “vetting” prior to John McCain naming her as his VP candidate? And that was just regarding the pregnancy of her teenage daughter. Good Grief!

The Charlotte Observer, which endorsed Barack Obama for President, now has issued the following comment: “Two weeks into the Obama presidency, we like his campaign better than his administration...While some of his appointments are outstanding, others

were either badly botched or reflect a half-hearted commitment to the change principle central to his ballot box success”.

And just think, it was only a few weeks ago it seemed the biggest challenges facing President Obama were whether or not he could keep his Blackberry, which school his daughters would go to, and what kind of puppy his family would acquire.

Barack Obama is a very intelligent but somewhat naïve man who will, I hope, learn the realities of economics, D.C. politics, international relations, and human nature. It’s tough going in the real world of our nation’s Capital. Pretty words can’t deliver results. I wager even he has said a few “Good Griefs!” in the last couple of weeks.

Late Breaking Information: Speaking of setting aside the politics of old, how about the President’s decision late last Friday to move the Census Bureau from the Commerce Department to the White House – presumably under the supervision of...guess who?...Rahm Emanuel! Remember that the new Commerce Secretary will probably be a Republican. The Census Bureau creates, processes, and otherwise administers all of the population information which determines political representation, apportionment, and reapportionment of our congressional districts – a very politically sensitive function. It was originally placed in the Commerce Department in an attempt to distance it from political influences. What would have been the Democrat’s and the Press’s reaction if President Bush had done a similar thing and put the function under Mr. Rove? There would have been HELL TO PAY!!

Post Partisan Politics?

UFF! DA! and GOOD GRIEF!

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