

The Political Forum

*A review of social and political trends and events
impacting the world's financial markets*

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THEY SAID IT

"The division of property has lessened the distance which separated the rich from the poor; but it would seem that, the nearer they draw to each other, the greater is their mutual hatred and the more vehement the envy and the dread with which they resist each other's claims to power; the idea of right does not exist for either party, and force affords to both the only security for the present and the only guarantee for the future."

Democracy in America, Alexis de Tocqueville.

CLASS WARFARE WITHIN THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY. There is a war brewing within the Democratic Party, you know. The battle lines are not clear yet, but basically it is going to pit the old-line, wealthy, blue blood, liberal establishment against the Dogpatch Clintonistas. And it's going to be a humdinger before it's over. Blood on the floor, as they say.

The first shot was fired in the Sunday *Washington Post* two weeks ago by Sally Quinn, Washington socialite and doyenne of the D.C.-based liberal Democratic establishment (see "Good Is Not A Legacy Of Evil" in the November 18 issue of this newsletter).

Quinn's opinions on politics were once regular fare in the *Post*, dating back to the days of Lyndon Johnson. Then she married the paper's wealthy and influential executive editor Benjamin Bradley, who is famous for teaming with Katherine Graham, the *Post's* President at the time, to lead the effort to run Nixon out of town. Currently Sally only writes occasionally, when she and hers have something important they want to say.

The thrust of Quinn's hard hitting op-ed piece, which was entitled "All Dough And No Mo," was that the reason the Democrats got thumped so badly in the recent elections was the Clinton legacy of moral slovenliness. Among other things, she said disapprovingly, Bill "promoted the notion that morals didn't matter."

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“The challenge the Democrats now face,” Quinn said, “is to get past the moral relativism that came to typify the Clinton era.” Then she offered the dire, all-or-nothing warning that if the party doesn’t rid itself of “the Clinton baggage—starting with the former president’s proxy, Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe . . . voters will continue to look at the [Democratic] party with a jaundiced eye, convinced that Democrats have lost the high ground . . . their perceived position as the morally superior party . . . their role as the champion of the little guy . . . their identity, much as Gore lost his.”

The second shot was fired last Thursday by the *Washington Post*’s new political cartoonist, Tom Toles. In a four-panel presentation, Toles showed a goofy looking Bill Clinton standing at a podium. In the first panel, Bill says, “Democrats lost the elections because of all your mistakes.” In the second, he says, “You messed up your message on security and on taxes and the economy and all the other issues across the board.” In the third, he says, “Those are all the things you did wrong.” And finally, in the fourth panel, he asks, “Have I forgotten anything?” To which a voice in the audience replies, “Yo ur zipper is open.” Down in the lower right-hand corner a small quipster says, “You presume he forgot.”

Now this is all coming from a political columnist and a newspaper that had virtually nothing critical to say about Bill during his entire eight sleaze-filled years in the White House. Neither Sally nor her paper said much of anything when the Clintons showed up in town accompanied by an astonishing array of sycophantic simpletons, cheap tarts, crooked Arkansas businessmen, international schemers, con men, shysters, sharpsters, flibbertigibbets and fly-by-nighters, and, to paraphrase T.S. Eliot, began the process of dismantling the ancient edifices of the Democratic Party to make ready the ground upon which the barbarian nomads of the future would encamp. And neither said much of anything when the Clintons left town after selling pardons to a bunch of low-life criminals and stealing the silver from the White House mess.

Now suddenly, with Bill out of office for two years and untouched by any major new scandals during that time, Quinn comes out of semi-retirement to blame all of the Democratic Party’s troubles on his “Monica antics.” And the *Post*’s political cartoonist drags out a tired old joke about his zipper.

Now it could be that Quinn and Tole just woke up feeling cranky about the November elections and couldn’t think of anyone better to blame than ol’ Bill. And it could be that they will all kiss and make up soon, and the Clintons and the Bradlees will be eating sautéed ground hog and grits at the Bradlee home on New Years Eve.

But I kind of doubt it. Sally and Ben and their pre-Clinton, establishment friends endured the Clintons for two terms, biting their tongues in public, while telling snide little inside jokes about the new Snopes family on Pennsylvania Avenue at private dinner parties, and waiting patiently for them to just go back to Arkansas “where they belong.” *And then they didn’t leave.* They hung around, him kibitzing from an office in, of all places, Harlem, and her waxing compassionate from a seat in the U.S. Senate and, of all things, hinting at a run for the presidency in 2004. Enough is enough, already.

To appreciate the coming battle, it is important to understand that Sally and Ben belong to a rare and dying species of Democrat, a species that came to power with Franklin Roosevelt and

reached its Golden Age 30 years later when Joe Kennedy's boy Jack, with his lovely, socialite wife Jackie Bouvier, became President and First Lady respectively.

Those were the days my friend, as the song goes. Those were the days when Democrats ruled. Those were the days when, in the words of Quinn, Democrats "cast themselves as the party with the big hearts, the integrity, the inclusiveness, the compassion." Those were the days when, as Quinn put it, Democrats "were the we-may-lose-but-we'll-still-be-able-to-look-at-ourselves-in-the-mirror-crowd."

Those were the days when the Democratic elite ran the biggest plantation in the world. They lived in the big house, and cared for the poor, the "people of color," and the "working stiffs" out of the goodness of the hearts.

Those were the days when the people who ran the Democratic Party had real money and real political power. And some of them even had class. And those who didn't, like Joe Kennedy, either faked it or followed the lead of Harry Crock in Garson Kanin's great Broadway hit "Born Yesterday," who told Billy Dawn (Judy Holliday's great stage creation) that couth didn't matter if you had money.

In the great golden "Camelot" period of those days, Ben Bradlee lived next door to Jack and Jackie, before they moved to the White House. They were best friends. In fact, Jack had a "close relationship" with the sister of Ben's then-wife Tony, the rich and beautiful Mary Meyer.

Mary and Tony came from one of America's prominent political families—the Pinchots of Pennsylvania. Mary, who was described as the most beautiful girl in Vassar's class of 1942, had been married to Cord Meyer Jr., who came from a wealthy, politically connected New York family. He was a senior official in the CIA and they lived right next door to Bobby and Ethel Kennedy in McLean, Virginia until they divorced and Mary moved to a Georgetown townhouse around the corner from her sister and Ben and Jack and Jackie.

Mary was murdered about a year after JFK's death, while walking on the toe path in Georgetown paralleling the old Chesapeake and Ohio barge canal. The crime was never solved, but the word around town was the CIA chief and close friend James Angleton himself became involved in the search for her secret diary. Those were the days when life for the ruling, Democratic political class was heady, if not always sweet.

Those were also the days when John Kerry, now Senator from Massachusetts, "became a Kennedy family regular," according to an article in *Rolling Stone Magazine* that can be found on the Senator's own web site, www.johnkerry.com. Kerry was dating Jackie's half sister at the time and "getting to know Jack himself at the Bouvier mansion in Newport, Rhode Island." *Rolling Stone* adds that, "By the time Kerry volunteered for Teddy Kennedy's Senate campaign in the summer of 1962, his hero was already president."

Needless to say, John Kerry is "one of them" as the saying goes, his mother Rosemary coming from the wealthy Brahmin Forbes family, whose money came from massive land holdings on Cape Cod. And, of course, Kerry is now married to the former Teresa Heinz, widow of former Republican Senator John Heinz III, of the catsup fortune. She is "beautiful, charming," and

“slightly exotic,” having been born in Mozambique, and educated at the Interpreters School of the University of Geneva. She is also worth hundreds of millions of dollars, and probably has never been to Arkansas.

Now you don't have to be a Brahmin yourself to realize that Sally and Ben and a handful of other Democrats who know which fork to use first, even if there are six at each setting, are getting a little tired of the likes of Bill and Hillary and that small time real estate hustler, Terry McAuliffe, running *their* party, the party of Roosevelt and Kennedy. Nor do you have to be a genius to realize that John Kerry, described in *Rolling Stone* as a “radical chic leftist,” would be more to their liking. It wouldn't be Camelot again. But it wouldn't be Dogpatch anymore either.

Now I'm sure Sally wouldn't admit this, but her sudden aversion to Bill has nothing to do with his “moral relativism” or his “Monica antics.” Many of the famous men from the elite side of the Democratic Party had more than their share of dirty-legged little servant girls in the pantry, and more than a few movie stars also, and many were no more scrupulous about thievery than Hillary Clinton, of cattle futures fame.

No, it's about “class.” And because it is about “class” it's going to be a great fight. The Clinton's won't go down easily. In fact, there's a good chance that they won't go down at all. They are political fighters *par excellence*. They have no scruples, no shame, and truckloads full of chutzpah. They are also the best fundraisers the Democrats have ever seen, so they have lots of “friends” in the party.

Time will tell whether Sally and the *Post* can rally enough support from the establishment side of the Party to “end the Clinton era,” as she hopes. There's only one sure way to succeed, and that's to elect a non-Clintonite to the Presidency in the White House in 2004.

Someone like John Kerry would do. Al and Tipper wouldn't. They are permanently tainted by the Clinton legacy whether they deserve to be or not. And they're a long way from the kind of “class act” that Sally and most “old Democrats” feel is necessary to restore the Party to its former position on the “moral high ground.”

The fight is a long way from over, but it is not too soon to pick a winner. The winner is the Republican Party.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT. *Modern Age*, a quarterly review published by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute, is one of my all-time favorite periodicals. The Winter 2002 issue is dedicated to essays by a group of noted conservative scholars addressing the question, “Is Religious Faith A Necessary Ground for Conservatism?” It is a fascinating issue, filled with historical and philosophical observations, and a marvelous parade of well-grounded arguments and exciting ideas. Just the thing for a cozy afternoon's reading.

One of my favorite essays was one by John Attarian, author of a recent book entitled *Social Security: False Consciousness and Crisis*,” as well two others that can be found on Amazon.com: *Education, Nihilism and Survival* (written with David Holbrook) and *The Passions of the Matriarchs*. His essay in *Modern Age* is entitled “The Only Answer to Modernity's Impiety.” The following are few brief excerpts from that piece, which I offer this

week as sort of a post-script to Sally Quinn's above-stated desire for a moral element in politics.

Civilization is not about affluence, economic growth, equality, opportunity or even liberty. It is essentially about enabling people to coexist in safety and order and thus to insure the survival and continuity of a population and its culture. Civilization rests on mutual self control that springs from inner checks on conduct and appetite, which flow from a shared moral vision. In turn, it rests on a shared understanding of human nature, which necessarily flows from a shared understanding of the nature of existence, and which entails a shared religion. Indeed, the first societies were united by ties of blood and shared faith.

Religion is the ontological foundation of civilization. Righteous atheists, agnostics, and secular humanists do not disprove this; tracing their righteousness to its source invariably yields religious exemplars; several, such as Clement Attlee, accepted Christian ethics while professing inability to believe in God, miracles, or Christ's divinity; and even Voltaire and Diderot admitted the necessity of religion for social control. The notion of the sacred infuses existence with meaning and value, imposes fetters on the will, and makes civilization possible. When religion is devalued existence is desacralized; and as checks on conduct vanish, civilization collapses.

If modern conservatives, engrossed in political and economic matters, do not understand this, civilization's enemies do. All of the West's impious efforts to destroy an existing civilization and create a secular utopia—the French Revolution, the Soviet tyranny, the Nazi tyranny—delegitimized and persecuted Christianity . . .

If civilization is not about economics and politics, neither is conservatism. A conservative's true task is to be a conservator of his civilization. A visceral, populist conservatism springing from fidelity to an existing community or way of life can win local political victories against, say, an overweening state, social engineering in the school, or an economic order sacrificing all noneconomic values to the imperatives of greed capitalism. But a conservatism which would comprehend and oppose the demonic impiety that drives modernity must be inspired by deeper fidelities; to the ethical orientation, vision of human nature, and understanding of existence informing that civilization and making its continued existence possible. This necessarily means affirmation of, and fidelity to, the underlying 'metaphysical dream': religion.

GOP WOMEN. Mary Landrieu may have beaten Suzanne Terrell in the Louisiana runoff Senate race last week, but it has still been a pretty good year for women in the GOP, which is worth noting because the female vote could be a decisive factor in the 2004 election. The following rundown is excerpted from the December 3 issue of a Republican National Committee newsletter called "Women Team Leader."

"President Bush began this positive trend by garnering the support of 43% of women voters – a tremendous improvement over the 38% earned in 1996. And according to *USA Today*, in 2002 Republicans earned a significantly higher percentage of women votes with 48% of women voting Republican. This growing support from women not only propelled Republicans into historic majorities, but also helped to elect 64

Republican women candidates to statewide or federal office. Some of the historic gains for Republican women include: [emphasis in original]

o **Twenty-one Republican women were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives this year.** This is more than double the number of Republican women elected in mid-term elections since 1990.

o Two Republican women were elected to the U.S. Senate this year, increasing the **number of Republican women senators to four.**

o Linda Lingle became the first Republican woman elected governor of Hawaii.

o **Congresswoman Deborah Pryce was elected Chairman of the House Republican Conference, became the 4th-ranking House leader,** and the highest-ranking woman to ever serve in the majority party in Congress.

A LITTLE LOWBROW HUMOR. I don't make a habit of running stupid e-mail-type jokes in this highly serious, sophisticated, ultra-intellectual, highbrow rag of mine. But my tastes run to country music and barnyard humor. So, of course, I thought this was funny. And it does contain an economic/political/geopolitical message, if you look hard enough for it. Besides, it came from my niece Julie in Florida, who has never been mentioned in these pages and thinks she is being slighted. So here goes. It came to me the highly imaginative title, "Cow Humor."

DEMOCRAT: You have two cows. Your neighbor has none. You feel guilty for being successful. You vote people into office that put a tax on your cows, forcing you to sell one to raise money to pay the tax. The people you voted for then take the tax money, buy a cow and give it to your neighbor. You feel righteous. Barbra Streisand sings for you.

SOCIALIST: You have two cows. The government takes one and gives it to your neighbor. You form a cooperative to tell him how to manage his cow.

REPUBLICAN: You have two cows. Your neighbor has none. So?

COMMUNIST: You have two cows. The government seizes both and provides you with milk. You wait in line for hours to get it. It is expensive and sour.

CAPITALISM, AMERICAN STYLE: You have two cows. You sell one, buy a bull, and build a herd of cows.

DEMOCRACY, AMERICAN STYLE: You have two cows. The government taxes you to the point you have to sell both to support a man in a foreign country who has only one cow, which was a gift from your government.

BUREAUCRACY, AMERICAN STYLE: You have two cows. The government takes them, shoots one, milks the other, pays you for the milk, and then pours the milk down the drain.

AMERICAN CORPORATION: You have two cows. You sell one, lease it back to yourself

and do an IPO on the 2nd one. You force the two cows to produce the milk of four cows. You are surprised when one cow drops dead. You spin an announcement to the analysts stating you have downsized and are reducing expenses. Your stock goes up.

FRENCH CORPORATION: You have two cows. You go on strike because you want three cows. You go to lunch. Life is good.

JAPANESE CORPORATION: You have two cows. You redesign them so they are one-tenth the size of an ordinary cow and produce twenty times the milk. They learn to travel on unbelievably crowded trains. Most are at the top of their class at cow school.

GERMAN CORPORATION: You have two cows. You engineer them so they are all blond, drink lots of beer, give excellent quality milk, and run a hundred miles an hour. Unfortunately they also demand 13 weeks of vacation per year.

ITALIAN CORPORATION: You have two cows but you don't know where they are. While ambling around, you see a beautiful woman. You break for lunch. Life is good.

RUSSIAN CORPORATION: You have two cows. You count them and learn you have five cows. You have some more vodka. You count them again and learn you have 42 cows. You count them again and learn you have 12 cows. You stop counting cows and open another bottle of vodka. You produce your 10th, 5-year plan in the last 3 months. The Mafia shows up and takes over however many cows you really have.

TALIBAN CORPORATION: You have all the cows in Afghanistan, which are two. You don't milk them because you cannot touch any creature's private parts. At night when no one is looking, you have sex with both of them. Then you kill them and claim a US bomb blew them up while they were in the hospital.

POLISH CORPORATION: You have two bulls. Employees are regularly maimed and killed attempting to milk them.

FLORIDA CORPORATION: You have a black cow and a brown cow. Everyone votes for the best looking one. Some people who like the brown one best, vote for the black one. Some vote for both. Some people vote for neither. Some people can't figure out how to vote at all. Finally, a bunch of guys from out-of-state tell you which is the best-looking one.

NEW YORK CORPORATION: You have fifteen million cows. You have to choose which one will be the leader of the herd, so you pick some fat cow from Arkansas.

END NOTES: Regime Change In Iraq? Lloyd Grove, who writes a column called “The Reliable Source” in the *Washington Post* reports that the State Department is replacing the badly deteriorated roof on the Iraqi Ambassador’s residence, which has been empty since 1991. “It’s a \$40,000-plus job,” the roofing contractor tells Grove, and adds that, “We could be finished by the end of the week. My impression is that sooner or later, somebody is going to actually live in it.” The bill is being paid out of long-frozen Iraqi bank accounts, the State Department says.

And The Loser Is . . . My endlessly informative, erudite friend Rich Galen offered the following observation the other day in his on-line, thrice-weekly column, *mullings.com*, which I had not considered before and found interesting. “The crack team of Mondale & Ferraro successfully LOST 49 states to the ticket which the mainstream media pretty much believed were uniquely unqualified to run the country: Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. In fact, because Mondale lost every state BUT Minnesota against Reagan in 1984, then lost the Senate race IN Minnesota to Norm Coleman last month, he holds the unbreakable record of being the only person in the history of the Republic to have lost elections in all 50 states.”

More And The Loser Is . . . Speaking of Mondale, a friend and client from the land of Ole and Lena, sends the following, “Quote of the Day” from the Letterman show: “Call me sentimental, but wasn't it nice to see Walter Mondale come out of retirement for one last ass whupping?”

Ousted O'Neill: For the true skinny on what happened to Paul O'Neill, check out www.borowitzreport.com. He has more sense and more insight than most other Washington reporters. The following is his latest take on this important story.

O'NEILL FIRED OVER ‘IT’S THE ECONOMY, STUPID’ REMARK. ‘Don’t Call Me Stupid,’ Bush Shot Back. A clearer picture of the events leading up to Treasury Secretary Paul H. O'Neill’s forced resignation was revealed today, as White House aides said that Mr. O'Neill was undone by unintentionally calling the President “stupid” in a meeting last week.

The heated exchange occurred at the White House late Thursday night, aides said, when Mr. O'Neill urged the President to focus more on the economy, telling Mr. Bush, “Remember, it’s the economy, stupid.” Mr. Bush’s face reportedly reddened with rage after Mr. O'Neill made his remark. “I know it’s the economy,” the President replied, “and don’t call me ‘stupid.’”

Mr. O'Neill quickly defended his “it’s the economy, stupid” remark as a figure of speech, but the President “would have none of it,” aides said. “I know when someone’s called me stupid, and you just called me stupid,” Mr. Bush said. “Well if I’m stupid, you’re a dickwad. How do you like them apples?”

Mr. O'Neill, realizing the he had walked into a rhetorical minefield, quickly attempted to mend fences with the President. “When I said ‘it’s the economy, stupid,’ I just meant that the economy is something you should focus more on,” Mr. O'Neill said. “Who are you calling a moron?” a furious Mr. Bush demanded, leaping from his chair. “It’s ‘whom,’” corrected Lawrence B. Lindsey, director of the National Economic Council, who was also present at the meeting. Moments after Mr. Lindsey’s “whom” remark, the President called him a “smart-ass” and abruptly demanded his resignation as well. “If there’s one thing the President hates more than being called stupid, it’s being corrected on that whole who-whom thing,” one aide said.

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