

# 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

“In June 1991, the largest international gathering of Islamist leaders ever held in the United States convened in the outskirts of Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the UASR\*, the extraordinary conference – which focused on the need to respond to the Western ‘crusades’ against Iraq, the need to destroy the ‘Jewish state’ and the threat of American-Crusader imperialism—was represented by nearly every major radical fundamentalist organization, including Islamic Jihad, Hizba Tahrir, Hizbollah, al-Jihad, Jamat Muslimeen and others. Representatives at this extraordinary conference included, to pick at random, [Mousa Abu] Marzuk, Ahmed bin Yousef, Abdulrahman al-Amoudi (now director of the American Muslim Council), Sami al-Arian (head of the Tampa-based Islamic Jihad front group known as the Islamic Committee for Palestine), Ramadan Abdullah Shallah (now head of the Islamic Jihad and former head of the Tampa-based Islamic Jihad front known as the World Islamic Studies Enterprise, or WISE), and many senior terrorist chieftains from overseas. The presence of so many militants has made this gathering the all-time ‘All-Star’ terrorist conference in U.S. history. Scores of papers and resolutions were presented that condemned the United States and Jews as part of a diabolical world plot to destroy Islam; those present also decided to support one another in their respective Islamic confrontations with their non-Islamic hosts . . . At the time this conference was held, as with other conferences, U.S. law enforcement and intelligence were totally unaware of its existence.”

\* United Association of Studies and Research, a “self-described Islamic ‘think-tank’ which in reality served as a covert branch for planning Hamas operations and disseminating propaganda.”

--Steven Emerson, from a lengthy paper entitled “Terrorism and the Middle East Peace Process, The Origins and Activities of Hamas in the United States,” prepared for the Senate Subcommittee on the Near East and South Asia, dated March 19, 1996.

**WHO’S TO BLAME for 9/11?** Of course, I have not been asked to testify before the 9/11 Commission concerning the important question of why the government failed to detect and stop the 9/11 catastrophes. Nevertheless, while watching the testimony of others, I have concluded that there is zero chance that this commission will arrive at the correct answer. So I thought I

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would set about the task this week of identifying the principal culprits, not in hopes that anyone in authority will pay attention, but simply for the sake of posterity.

To come directly to the point, I believe that two factors were overwhelmingly responsible for the failure of the government to prevent 9/11. The first of these was that neither Bill Clinton nor any senior member of his team had either the skills or the inclination to understand and properly process the information that was available concerning the threat from militant Islam.

Clinton himself was a good-old-boy politician from a tiny, rural state, whose two greatest interests were retail politics and sexual gratification. Beyond a coat-and-tie involvement with the left-wing antiwar movement many years earlier, he had little experience and even less interest in the world beyond his personal doorstep. Disdainful of convention moral and ethical standards, his personal code of conduct appears to have been largely made up of a highly flexible assortment of politically correct liberal shibboleths. As such, the criteria he used to choose high level officials and associates seems to have been a combination of diversity considerations, an affinity or at least a high tolerance for sleaze, and a commitment to him personally.

I addressed this in the seventh issue of this newsletter, dated May 29, 2002 entitled “Looking For Someone To Blame For September 11?” To wit:

I mean, for eight years, this nation had a president who, with the help of his wife, staffed virtually the entire upper echelon of the executive branch of the government with a veritable parade of crooks, incompetents, political hacks, and fools, the likes of which few banana republics have ever seen. Scandals consumed one important agency after another, from the Departments of Justice, State, Energy, and Commerce to the chief law enforcement and intelligence gathering branches of the government, including both the FBI and the CIA.

The entire senior White House staff, for eight straight years, consisted almost exclusively of political spin control experts and defense lawyers, whose sole combined purpose in life was to “manage” the multiple scandals that swirled around this poor sap of a president, who was not only deeply unethical but whose sexual antics made England’s Lloyd George, known as the “Welsh goat” in his time, look like a school boy. No foreign policy experts there. No law enforcement experts there. No intelligence experts there. Just political hacks and shysters, wall to wall. And now, the Democrats, wonder, “what happened?”

Well, if they really want to know, dozens of books have been published explaining in painful detail “what happened;” books with such titles as *Unlimited Access*, *Betrayal*, *Partners in Power*, *The Strange Death of Vincent Foster*, *The First Partner*, *The Impeachment of William Jefferson Clinton*, *Spin Cycle*, *Hillary’s Choice*, *Sell Out*, *The Agenda*, *The Star Report*, *A Washington Tragedy*, *Boy Clinton*, *On the Edge*, *The Secret Life of Bill Clinton*, *Hell to Pay*, *The Final Days*, *High Crimes and Misdemeanors*, *Uncovering Clinton*, and the list goes on, each one offering gruesome details of a president who “fiddled,” or “diddled” as the case may be, while radical Arabs prepared the fire that would burn the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

As I wrote many times during the Clinton years, this administration was a disaster waiting to happen. It was a difficult case to make at the time because it seemed to the casual observer that the world had become an exceedingly safe place in the aftermath of the long Cold War.

Yet, in the midst of this relatively tranquil period, during which the United States proudly ascended to the role of the “the world’s sole remaining superpower,” trouble was brewing in the form of a worldwide, radical, hate-based, cultic movement, financed with vast sums of Middle Eastern oil money, the ill-gotten gains of a host of Middle East dictators, and contributions from tens of thousands of Arab expatriates scattered throughout the world. Marked by poisonous levels of hatred for the West generally and Jews and Americans specifically, this movement spread across the American landscape during the 1990s like a deadly pest bacillus.

Powerful lobbying and public relations organizations were established in Washington and various state capitals, ostensibly to promote the welfare and protect the legal rights of the Muslim immigrants who were steaming into the United States. But these organizations were actually dedicated to indoctrinating these immigrants with hatred for the fundamental tenets of their new home and providing legal and political protection to the most militant and dangerous elements within their ranks.

New mosques began sprouting up in every major city in the nation, a great many of which were financed by Saudi Arabia for the specific purpose of spreading the hate-filled Wahhabi form of Islam. Senior members and leaders of some of the world’s most murderous terrorist organizations moved freely in and out of the United States under the sponsorship of the above mentioned lobbying and public relations groups, preaching hatred in mosques and convention halls across the land, and establishing secret cells of militants for use in the battles to come.

Dozens of Muslim “charities” were established in state after state from Texas to Washington, from California to New Jersey, with the professed goal of providing hospitals, schools and subsistence support for poor Muslims in the Middle East, but which were actually fronts to finance terrorist operations against Israel and Western targets in the Middle East.

These events did not go unnoticed, of course. In fact, although the mainstream media seems enchanted right now with the highly confused recollections of the strange little fellow, Richard Clark, the fact is that there were many individuals, both inside and outside the government, who were pounding the table throughout the Clinton years about the looming threat posed by some elements within America’s rapidly growing Muslim community.

Yet, not only were the upper echelons of the Clinton administration oblivious to these warnings, but Bill and Hillary were themselves playing host to some of the most important and treacherous characters in the remarkable story of militant Islam’s march into the very heart of the American establishment. In fact, while numerous books have been written about how political operatives from the Chinese government stole and bought vast quantities of America’s most valuable nuclear secrets from the Clinton crowd, in the modern day equivalent of the purchase of Manhattan for \$24 worth of glass beads, few people have commented on the equally remarkable story of how militant Muslims were able to bamboozle the Clintons themselves into providing cover for their deadly operations.

Space does not permit an in-depth exploration of this point, but as I write this I have before me an extensive clip file of articles on the subject, including one that features a picture of Bill and Al posing at the White House with Abdurahman Alamoudi, then head of the American Muslim Council (AMC) and now in jail as an alleged key figure in an international terrorist organization, and a picture of Hillary at the White House with Ibrahim Hooper, communications director for the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), a virulently anti-Semitic, hate group that had been founded two years earlier by Nihad Awad, who was at the time, among other things, the editor of the Islamic Association for Palestine's (IAP) *Muslim World Monitor*, a bi-weekly Hamas propaganda publication that championed Hamas terrorism and promoted crude anti-Semitism and anti-western conspiracies.

The headline on this article, which is dated November 3, 1996, is "Terrorist Ties OK at White House," which indicates that while some might have argued at the time that these two men were legitimate, peaceful representatives of the American Muslim community, others had serious doubts and considerable evidence to support these doubts. The author of the article was my friend Steven Emerson. The following are a few quotes from it.

Imagine the president of the United States inviting to the White House the comrades of one of the top international terrorists in the world, a terrorist chieftain who has orchestrated mass murder against scores of innocent civilians, including American children. Or visualize a picture of first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton warmly greeting a top leader of an American branch of a radical Islamic terrorist front group. Or think of the vice president of the United States happily embracing a top Islamic militant leader who has championed the terrorist mastermind behind the World Trade Center bombing, a plot that was designed to kill 50,000 American people.

Unfortunately, you do not need a wild imagination to conjure up these images. These meetings actually occurred within the past year, as evidenced by the photos that accompany this article . . . Records and documents obtained from both the White House and the internal publications of the groups themselves show that CAIR and AMC have been invited repeatedly into the White House by the president, the first lady and Vice President Al Gore . . .

Curiously, the White House met with these groups despite an abundance of available material showing these groups to be tied to terrorist movements. Even after the meetings with the radical Islamic groups were publicly exposed in a *Wall Street Journal* article by this writer in March 1996, the White House continued to meet with the militants. The question is why.

Steve does not answer this final question. And I won't attempt to do so in this article, except to posit my view that it involves a combination of the allure of votes and campaign contributions from the rapidly growing Muslim community, a probable series of personal promises from individuals with access to vast amounts of Middle Eastern money and business opportunities, Bill's narrow understanding of the stakes involved in the geopolitical struggles that were filling the void created by the end of the Cold War, the presence of senior advisors around him who were even dumber than he about such matters, and a general disdain throughout the entire liberal

community for the majority of the people who were delivering the warnings, i.e., law enforcement and intelligence officials and conservative critics of the Clinton administration.

What I would rather discuss, because I think it is more important to the issues being addressed by the 9/11 Commission, is the principal means used by Islamists and their allies to discredit those who were attempting to call attention to the looming terrorist threat.

In fact, the great effectiveness of this response is the second of the two factors that I noted earlier in this article were, in my opinion, overwhelmingly responsible for the failure of the government to prevent 9/11. For lack of a better term, I will describe this tactic, as I have done before in these pages, as “the terrible swift sword of political correctness.”

Time and again, AMC, CAIR and other similar organizations quieted or effectively diminished the impact of their critics by branding them as racists, a charge they knew would resonate loudly in the liberal mainstream media and the White House, even in the absence of any proof whatsoever. The result was that virtually everyone, whether inside or outside the government, who was involved in working to prevent another catastrophe such as the first World Trade Center bombing routinely found him or herself on the defensive.

Even with my limited involvement, which was confined to reporting the views of such people as Emerson and other friends who were involved in the counter-terrorism effort, I was always aware that I was just one complaint by CAIR or AMC away from being told to stop writing on the “racially charged” subject of terrorism or join the ranks of the unemployed.

I remember regularly seeing Steve on network television shows, paired with a representative of one of the radical hate groups who was there “in the interests of fairness” to present the “other side.” I also remember well the extraordinary barrage of charges of racism that were thrown at him from the time he first identified and described in his 1994 PBS special “Jihad in America,” the existence of an international, terrorist recruitment, support, propaganda and fund-raising structure that was operating freely within the United States “under the protection of American civil liberties.”

And I wonder to this day, how it might have turned out if Bill, Hill and Al, instead of hobnobbing with representatives from AMC and CAIR, had invited Steve to the White House and reviewed with him the lengthy laundry list of troubling developments he compiled in 1996, many of which did not receive the full attention of the U.S. government until George Bush declared a “war on terror” in the aftermath of 9/11.

This list included details about the hate campaigns of various Muslim public relations groups, which were holding conferences and meeting in cities across the nation, beginning in 1991, and featuring known terrorists from various Middle East groups as speakers, who exhorted the attendees to yell in unison “kill the Jews.” It included details of “complex money laundering schemes” that were being “used by radical Islamic foundations and companies to launder millions of dollars from the Persian Gulf to radical groups in the U.S.” It included details of “charitable” front organizations, such as the Holy Land Foundation for Relief and Development in Richardson Texas, which was actually a “wing of Hamas,” set up to help finance organized terrorist training sessions.

Or what if Bill, Hill and Al had taken seriously a report entitled “Terror 2000,” that was co-authored in 1993, the year of the first World Trade Center bombing, by my friend Peter Probst, a former CIA employee who was at the time working on terrorism issues at the Pentagon.

This several-hundred-page report predicted the coming of the age of terrorism, detailed the nature of the threats involved, and stated, among other things, that “we must be prepared to defend against dangers that only a few years ago seemed impossible.” The report was never published because someone, somewhere in the Clinton administration considered it to be too “alarmist,” although one could be forgiven for believing that political correctness played a larger part in the decision than the fear of alarming anyone.

It is anyone’s guess where the 9/11 Commission will ultimately lay the blame for that terrible day. The intense interest that some members have shown in the muddy recollections of Richard Clark is, in my opinion, not a particularly good sign that the group will come up with any meaningful insights. But the rest of us can find comfort in a variety of positive changes that have taken place since September 11, 2001, although it is quite certain that these will go unnoticed by the Commission.

The nation, for example, now has a President who seems to understand the nature of the threat, and more importantly, one who has provided the law enforcement and intelligence gathering communities with most of the resources necessary to fight against it. Equally important is the fact that, in the wake of 9/11, few Americans today have any tolerance for critics who would malign the motives of those individuals both inside and outside the government who are working to prevent another such attack.

**JOHN McCAIN FOR DEFSEC? BRING IT ON.** Several weeks ago, the speculation in Washington about Senator John McCain’s motives for crossing party lines, once again, and supporting his friend, colleague, and fellow Vietnam War veteran John Kerry against charges of being weak on national defense veered off into the absurd.

Some members of the chattering class got it in their heads that McCain would make a great running mate for Kerry and that he was, in fact, auditioning for the spot. When asked about the possibility, McCain fueled the fire a bit, saying that he would certainly “entertain” the idea, although he also conceded that he would never officially leave the GOP, and that it would be extremely unlikely that the Democratic Party would ever agree to the idea of a pro-gun, pro-life, deficit hawk on half of the ticket.

Last week, the speculation about a Kerry-McCain match took a more realistic, though, in my opinion, still unlikely turn, as several published reports, including one in Kerry’s hometown *Boston Herald*, suggested that the Democratic nominee would tap his fellow Senator as his presumptive Defense Secretary sometime before the election. Such a move would, the theory went, insulate Kerry against the aforementioned charges and bring a touch of bipartisanship to a campaign that is likely to be the most aggressively partisan in some time. As former Kerry and former Gore spokesman Chris Lehane put it: “It makes a lot of sense. McCain transcends partisanship, the public sees him as a truly independent voice.”

Now, I know that a good number of conservatives are more than a little concerned about the possibility of such a partisan break. Though they tend not to like McCain personally, most conservative commentators acknowledge his popularity with the media, and agree that his ideas often resonate with the non-partisan center. They also concede that he would, indeed, bring national defense *bona fides* to the Kerry camp at a time when it desperately needs them. In the words of *National Review Online* editor Kathryn Jean Lopez:

I've never been a McCainiac – I think he's all wrong on campaign-finance reform, of course – but he was terrific during the Iraq war, and on the terror war. And, fact is, when he's on, he's on, and so you always want him on your side. Couldn't blame Kerry if he wanted him for SecDef. And, it would be, I might add, hugely damaging if Kerry pulled off a pre-election McCain defection like that.

I disagree. I think it is more likely that picking McCain could hurt Kerry and hurt him badly. In fact, if I were running the Bush campaign, I would respond to such speculation by stealing a line from Kerry's own campaign: "Bring it on."

You see, ever since Vietnam, Democrats as a whole have rightfully earned a reputation for being soft on defense and national security. In this time of war, this will be one of the themes President Bush and the GOP will hit the hardest, as indeed they've already shown. And if Kerry allies himself with McCain, he will, for all intents and purposes, be conceding their point.

Yes, the desire to appear bipartisan by harnessing John McCain's popularity is compelling. But what kind of message does it send about the Democratic Party's credentials on defense and national security if Kerry cannot find anyone in his own party to fill the position? ***It is worth remembering as you ponder this question that Bill Clinton's last Secretary of Defense, Bill Cohen, was also a Republican.*** Clinton picked a Republican; Bush (naturally) picked a Republican; and now Kerry is flirting with the idea of picking a Republican. Talk about sending a message.

John Kerry does indeed have a real problem in that he has, repeatedly over the years, voted against higher defense spending, against the new weapons systems that are proving so effective in Afghanistan and Iraq, and against national security initiatives. But this is not his problem alone; it is, more importantly a weakness of his party. If, in attempt to shore up that weakness, he taps John McCain as his Defense Secretary, he will do nothing but make this weakness all the more evident. Why, President Bush will be able to ask, would you want to vote for a party that's a pretender on defense and national security when you can have the real deal? And Kerry will have no answer.

**NOTES: Not In Kerry's Backyard?** It's not a make-or-break political situation, but it will be fun to see how John and Teresa will come down on a plan to place 130 wind turbines off the coast of Nantucket Sound, in sight of one of their many mansions. Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and Ted Kennedy are leading the charge against the project. But all eyes are on the Kerrys. As everyone knows by now, she is an "ardent environmentalist," which means that just as Hillary had a greater fondness for children than lesser mortals, the Ketchup Queen is particularly enamored with pristine surroundings.

And even more importantly, her husband has made alternative sources of energy one of the centerpieces of his primary campaign, often noting in his stump speeches that one of the most important elements that he “brings to this fight” is “the clear and absolute concept that our party needs to stand up and make it clear, on behalf of future generations, on behalf of common sense, that no young American in uniform, man or woman, ought to ever, ever be held hostage to America’s dependency on fossil fuel oil from the Middle East.”

Given the opposition from the wealthy Massachusetts elite, it is quite clear that the fate of the development won’t be determined before the election. But due to intense interest, the Kerrys may be forced to take a public position on the project before then. The company pushing it, Cape Wind Associates, notes that the location on Horseshoe Shoal in Nantucket Sound is perfect for the following reasons: strong winds, shallow water, low waves, no ferry routes, no shipping lanes, and no flight paths. It also notes that last April a barge bringing fuel to the oil burning plant that currently serves the Hyannis Port compounds of the Kerrys and the Kennedys ruptured, spilling from 35,00 to 55,000 gallons of oil into a bay off the cape killing birds and shellfish. And, of course, the risk to U.S. troops from having to defend the wicked oil interests would be diminished, or as Kerry puts it when stumping for aggressive development of “alternative fuels,” “in decades to come, we should not have to send young people into battle to defend and die for America’s gluttony for fossil fuel.”

**FOLLOW-UPS: A Truly Unhealthy Obsession, Redux.** In last week’s “End Notes,” we described as “entirely implausible” John Kerry’s goofy story about his favorite pet, a dog named “VC” who manned his swift boat in Vietnam and who was blown clear onto another boat after Kerry’s boat hit a mine. We have had a number of questions about that characterization, with a couple of correspondents calling it a bit unfair. In a sense, our critics are right. The story told by Kerry was not “entirely implausible.” It was nigh on impossible, both practically and physically.

Let us start with the practical side of the story, where we’ll let the incomparable Mark Steyn do the honors. To wit:

Is it normal to take a yappy mutt on a swift boat patrol through enemy territory? Especially a mutt named after the enemy. Calling out “Over here, VC” in the middle of the jungle seems a good way to get taken out by friendly fire. Come to think of it, how many folks name their dogs after the enemy? Did British Tommies stumble across stray French poodles on the beach at Normandy and think, “Aw, cute li’l feller. I’ll call him SS.” Weird.

As for the physics involved, we have seen several good critiques of Kerry’s story, but perhaps the best was penned by blogger Steve Sturm, who wrote:

Kerry’s boat was “heading up a river,” which means the boat was moving. I assume Naval doctrine in those days called for ships to maintain a minimum distance from one another in order to minimize damage and casualties in the event one ship draws hostile fire, hits a mine, etc. How far away from Kerry’s boat was this other boat – 20 yards, 50 yards, 100 yards? Even if they weren’t strictly adhering to doctrine, there ought to have been some separation; there’s no reason I can think why one boat would be running upriver with another boat tied to its stern.

So, we have Kerry claiming that his ship hit a mine that generated enough explosive energy to propel this dog . . . some 40 yards or so through the air, without hurting the dog? Unlikely.

Now, what are the odds of the dog being catapulted from Kerry's moving boat and landing on another moving boat? It must have been the perfect combination of launch angle, distance, explosive force, trajectory and the like for that to have happened. I know for a fact that this is no easy thing to do: think how hard it is to win that silly carnival frog game -- and that's from a stationary platform. Maybe this happens in the movies, but not in real life. Wait a minute, in the remake of Starsky & Hutch, they tried launching a car into the air trying to land it on a moving boat. They failed miserably. So, I take it back, it doesn't even happen in the movies.

And, Kerry's account refers only to "picking ourselves up" after the explosion. There's an explosion so forceful that it launches the dog into near earth orbit and all Kerry and his crew have to do is "pick themselves up"? Again, I'm no physics major, but wouldn't it reasonable to think that an explosion with that much force wouldn't have seriously damaged the boat? What about his crew -- granted they're all likely to have been bigger than the dog, and perhaps better able to absorb the shock, but none of them were hurt, knocked out, knocked overboard?

Like we said, entirely implausible.

**Clinton's Guru Forecasts A Blowout for Bush.** Several weeks ago, we went on record defying the conventional wisdom that the match-up between President Bush and John Kerry will be close. We are no longer alone among the pundit class in making such a break. Last week, Dick Morris joined in, as he too predicted that this thing will likely be a rout.

As you read the following, keep in mind that Dick Morris is no mere ordinary pundit, but was, at one time, Bill Clinton's vaunted political strategy guru. While Karl Rove presumably does not share Morris's predilections for hookers, toes, and hookers' toes, he holds essentially the same position in this White House as Morris did in the Clinton White House. In other words, Morris should know what he's talking about, since he was the mastermind behind Bill's drubbing of Bob Dole. Morris put it thusly:

This Democrat is not ready to run for president, and the more the Republicans press him, the more he will self-destruct. His campaign advisers are hoping that a few hours extra sleep on his ski trip will restore his political judgment, but they ignore the fact that he never had a lot to begin with. The fact is that Massachusetts liberal Democrats don't spend a lot of time learning how to appeal to middle America.

Kerry only won the nomination because Dean lost it, and Edwards was hobbled by Clark so he could not get the momentum he needed to mount a real challenge. With the front-loaded process, decreed by financial-wizard-but-political-amateur Terry McAuliffe, the party is united but saddled with a nominee who can't handle prime time.

Bush needs to keep up the pressure and watch Kerry's ratings drop. In a few months, we may be wondering why the conventional wisdom ever thought this race would be so close.

You said it, Dick. And so did we, but before you did.

**Clarke: GOP to Blame for Bin Laden.** In the lead piece in this edition of this newsletter, Mark makes several points about why the terrorist threat posed by Islamists went unaddressed during the eight years of the Clinton administration, one of which involved Bill's various ethical "distractions" that kept his attention focused on other, more localized problems.

As it turns out, though, Mark is wrong. Clinton's ethics concerns were not the problem. No, Republicans' insistence on holding the President accountable for his ethical lapses was the problem, at least according to the current 15-minute-of-fame luminary, former terrorism czar Richard Clarke.

On page 225 of his much-ballyhooed book, for example, Clark does his very best to lay the blame at the feet of those pesky Republicans and their equally pesky witch hunts. He writes:

Because of the intensity of the political opposition that Clinton engendered, he had been heavily criticized for bombing al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan, for engaging in 'Wag the Dog' tactics to divert attention from a scandal about his personal life. For similar reasons, he could not fire the recalcitrant FBI Director who had failed to fix the Bureau or to uncover terrorists in the United States.

You've got to love that part about Louis Freeh. If we understand Clarke's argument, it goes something like this: Clinton (and Gore) broke every rule in the book raising cash from foreign and other questionable sources during the 1996 campaign, including taking donations from the Chinese military and from erstwhile sworn-to-poverty Buddhist nuns. The lawlessness was so obvious and significant that FBI Director Freeh, no friend of Republicans he, felt obliged to recommend that an Independent Counsel be appointed to investigate the "irregularities." But, because of the fact that Freeh suspected Clinton had broken the law, Clinton couldn't fire him, for fear of a backlash, meaning that the incompetent Director remained in his position until after Bill left office. And this is all somehow Newt Gingrich's fault.

It is no wonder that last week saw so many of Clarke's former colleagues declaring their disappointment in a man whom they once respected and admired, but who had – perhaps out of anger, or greed, or ambition – compromised himself and a once-admirable career.

**Kerry and Catholics.** Regular readers will recall that for some time now, we have noted the increasingly aggressive stance taken by the Catholic Church with regard to Catholic politicians who publicly and enthusiastically embrace policies that conflict with Church teachings on a number of subjects, most notably abortion, and the potential effect of that stance on the Catholic electorate. It has long been obvious that Catholic teachings are in direct conflict with the values of the modern Democratic Party, and the Church's more active stance has hastened Catholic voters' slow but steady journey toward the GOP. This trend will, we've argued, almost certainly

be exacerbated by the fact that John Kerry is at least nominally a Catholic, which will serve to ensure that the Democrat-Catholic conflict receives maximum media play this campaign season.

This week, we have two new examples of the problems John Kerry will likely have with his own Church. First, in today's editions of *Time* magazine, a Vatican official is quoted as saying: "People in Rome are becoming more and more aware that there's a problem with John Kerry, and a potential scandal with his apparent profession of his Catholic faith and some of his stances, particularly abortion."

Kerry, for his part, appears not to care too terribly what the Church thinks of his faith, as he told *Time* on Saturday, "I don't think it [the Vatican's concern] complicates things at all. We have a separation of church and state in this country." Kerry also told reporters that he intends to continue taking communion, despite cautions from several Bishops (including Kerry's own, Boston Archbishop Sean O'Malley) that Catholics who publicly support pro-choice causes had better not "dare" to come to receive the sacrament.

All of this promises to reach a head this summer, when Kerry, who cannot back away from his pro-choice stances and who, indeed, voted against the Unborn Victims of Violence Act last week, will likely either be publicly scolded by Archbishop O'Malley, or be denied communion, in front of reporters and cameras nonetheless, while attending mass on the campaign trail.

Additionally, Ono Ekeh, formerly the program coordinator at the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for African-American Catholics, was apparently relieved of his duties earlier this month, after it was learned that he was the moderator of the "Catholics for Kerry" web/e-mail discussion group and, in that role, had criticized the Church and defended Kerry's support for abortion rights, sometimes using work computers. While this is, in the grand scheme of things, small potatoes, it is also indicative of a greater unwillingness among Church authorities to tolerate public antagonism to Church teachings by politically active Catholics.

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**THE POLITICAL FORUM**

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