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Sober Thoughts in the Current Campaign Season

By Marilyn Brannan

Peter W. Rodman, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, offered the following observation in a recent article: “Those running for president would be well advised, to reflect on what will be required of the winner. Potentially the most destabilizing new factor in the world in the coming period is the fear of American weakness. All the hyperventilation about American hubris and unilateralism is a tired cliché... The real problem is that the pressures pushing us to accept defeat in Iraq are already profoundly unnerving to allies in the Middle East, and elsewhere, who rely on the United States to help ensure their security in the face of continuing dangers. If we let ourselves be driven out of Iraq, what the world will seek most from the next president will not be some great demonstration of humility and self-abasement ...but rather, reassurance that the United States is still strong, capable of acting decisively and committed to the security of its friends...[Providing] this reassurance will be an uphill battle in the best of circumstances. It will be even more difficult if President Bush succumbs to all the pressures on him [now] to do the wrong thing in Iraq.” (From “Political Cover for Whom?” *Washington Post*, July 29, 2007)

Dirty Tricks on Left Side of the Aisle

(Editor's Note: We include the following item as one more example of the Democrats' no-holds-bared strategies – particularly in this current Congress – to undermine public expectations of an orderly process of business in Washington. Obviously, if either party is successful in throwing out rules of conduct in Congress, it is a preliminary step toward throwing out Rule of Law in general.)

Partisan tensions erupted on the floor of the House of Representatives late in the evening of August 2, when Republicans walked out on a House vote to protest what they believed to be underhanded Democratic maneuvers to reverse an outcome unfavorable for them. The flap manifested a complete breakdown in parliamentary procedure and a distinct low point for the often bitterly divided chamber.

Chaos erupted shortly before 11 p.m., when Rep. Michael R. McNulty (D-N.Y.) gaveled close the vote on a standard procedural measure while the outcome was still in doubt.

Republicans argued afterward that they had secured a 215-213 win on their motion to bar undocumented immigrants from receiving any federal funds allotted in the agricultural spending bill for employment or rental assistance. Democrats claimed the measure was deadlocked at 214-214 and failed.

One GOP aide saw McNulty gavel the vote to a close after receiving a signal from his leaders, but before reading the official tally. In a strange development that infuriated Republicans, votes continued to shift even after McNulty closed the roll call.

Amidst the acrimonious uproar, parliamentarians on either side of the aisle argued over protocol.

Majority Leader Steny H. Hoyer (D-Md.) eventually offered a motion to reconsider, ostensibly giving members a chance to recast their votes. But that maneuver angered Republicans even further, and when Democrats finally moved to consider the spending bill as the last vote of the night, furious Republicans left the chamber en masse to protest the maneuver. The House eventually recessed at 11:18 p.m. Republicans discovered shortly afterward that there was no longer any record of the controversial vote and immediately charged Democrats with erasing the bad result.

King Amendment to Homeland Security Bill Saved

(Editor: The King Amendment is a highly significant amendment. Had it been defeated, it would have been a huge victory for terrorists and their supporters, handed to them by Congressional Democrats.)

The Center for Security Policy reported on July 25 that its efforts, along with those of innumerable bloggers, radio talk show hosts, and other public-minded citizens, had translated into an important legislative victory. Thanks to the leadership of Sens. Joe Lieberman (chairman) and Susan Collins (ranking minority member) of the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, and thanks to efforts by Rep. Peter King, legislation that will protect

“terrorism tipsters” will shortly become law. The King Amendment got 304 votes in the House and 57 in the Senate, *but a majority of Democrats voted against it in both houses.*

The language will provide protection against the sorts of harassment lawsuits filed by the Council on Americans-Islamic Relations (CAIR) after several unidentified individuals reported six Muslim imams engaged in suspicious behavior prior to boarding a USAir flight in November 2006.

Obviously, law enforcement cannot police everywhere; thus, civilian tips are indispensable. Without this important piece of legislation, people who observe behavior that suggests terrorist activity would have to worry about being sued if their suspicions proved unfounded.

Pentagon: Hillary Boosting Enemy Propaganda

The Pentagon issued a stinging rebuke in July to Democratic presidential front-runner Hillary Rodham Clinton, arguing that she is boosting enemy propaganda by demanding to know how the U.S. plans to eventually withdraw from Iraq.

Under Secretary of Defense Eric Edelman wrote a biting reply to questions that Mrs. Clinton had raised in May, when she urged the Pentagon to start planning immediately for the withdrawal of U.S. troops. A copy of Edelman’s response, dated July 16, was obtained by the Associated Press.

“Premature and public discussion of the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq reinforces enemy propaganda that the United States will abandon its allies in Iraq, much as we are perceived to have done in Vietnam, Lebanon, and Somalia,” Edelman wrote. He added that “such talk understandably unnerves the very same Iraqi allies we are asking to assume enormous personal risks.”

Clinton, a member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, has privately and publicly pushed Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Joint Chief’s Chairman Peter Pace to begin drafting plans for what she said will be a complicated withdrawal of troops, trucks, and equipment.

Not surprisingly, Clinton’s spokesman, Philippe Reines, called Edelman’s response “outrageous and dangerous.” He added that U.S. military leaders should offer a withdrawal plan rather than “a political plan to attack those who question them” (NewsMax.com, July 19, 2007).

Editor: Reines’ response to Edelman sounds a lot like Mrs. Clinton’s “Sick and Tired” speech some time back, following her well publicized tirade against Bush Administration policy. When Administration officials rebutted her attack on that occasion, Mrs. Clinton quickly retreated from the hardball arena and addressed a gathering of supporters with her now-famous, high-decibel rant about her patriotism being questioned.