

BARACK'S BROKEN PROMISES

WINDING DOWN THE WAR ON TERROR

“It is time to bring our troops home because it has made us less safe.”
—Barack Obama, *New York Times*, Aug. 12, 2007

“President Barack Obama has approved a significant troop increase for Afghanistan. ... The increased troop levels are expected to last three to four years, the military official said. However, the administration official said there was no clear timeline.”
—CNN, Feb. 18, 2009

CUTTING SPENDING

“There is no doubt that we’ve been living beyond our means and we’re going to have to make some adjustments. Now, what I’ve done throughout this campaign is to propose a net spending cut.”
—Barack Obama, Oct. 15, 2008

“Mr. Obama plans to increase the debt by at least \$9.1 trillion over the next decade. In that period of time, Mr. Obama’s programs will increase federal spending by \$400 billion to \$500 billion per year ... the largest peacetime increase ever in government spending.”
—*Washington Times*, Jan. 19, 2010

CLOSING GITMO

“I don’t want to be ambiguous about this. We are going to close Guantanamo.”
—Barack Obama, “This Week,” Jan. 12, 2009

“As one of his very first acts as president, Obama signed an executive order to close the military prison for terror suspects within a year. The one-year mark arrives Friday, and he will miss it by a wide margin, likely a year or more. He has not offered a new deadline.”
—*The Canadian Press*, Jan. 21, 2010

LIMITING EXECUTIVE POWER

“I will not use signing statements to nullify or undermine congressional instructions as enacted into law.”
—Barack Obama, *Boston Globe*, Dec. 20, 2007

“We were surprised to read your signing statement in which you expressed the view that you are constitutionally free to ignore the conditions duly adopted in the legislative process...”
—Reps. Barney Frank and David Obey, letter to President Obama, July 21, 2009

BROKERING MIDEAST PEACE

“My goal is to make sure that we work, starting from the minute I’m sworn into office, to try to find some breakthroughs.”
—Barack Obama, Amman, Jordan, July 22, 2008

“I think it is absolutely true that what we did this year didn’t produce the kind of breakthrough that we wanted, and if we had anticipated some of these political problems on both sides earlier, we might not have raised expectations as high.”
—Barack Obama, *Time*, Jan. 21, 2010

ELIMINATING EARMARKS

“We are going to ban all earmarks—the process by which individual members insert pet projects without review.”
—Barack Obama, Jan. 6, 2008

“President Obama will sign the \$410 billion omnibus spending bill recently passed by the Democratic controlled Congress. The bill contains some 9,000 earmarks, spending items inserted by individual Congressmen for pet projects in their districts.”
—*Politics Daily*, March 2, 2009

EXCLUDING LOBBYISTS

“I have done more to take on lobbyists than any other candidate in this race—and I’ve won. I don’t take a dime of their money, and when I am president, they won’t find a job in my White House.”
—Barack Obama, Spartanburg, S.C., Nov. 3, 2007

“A *National Journal* look at 267 Obama nominees and appointees found that at least 30—or about 11 percent—have been registered lobbyists at some point during the past five years.”
—*National Journal*, March 21, 2009

INCREASING TRANSPARENCY

“All agencies should adopt a presumption in favor of disclosure, in order to renew their commitment to the principles embodied in FOIA, and to usher in a new era of open Government.”
—Barack Obama, Jan. 21, 2009

“President Obama has embraced Bush administration justifications for denying public access to White House visitor logs ...”
—*Washington Post*, June 17, 2009

Southern Cross

The meaning of the Mel Bradford moment

By David Gordon

“YOU JUST CAN’T attack Lincoln and get away with it—you just can’t.” Hearing these words, spoken in front of a portrait of Lincoln at the Rockford Institute in 1989, is my first memory of Mel Bradford. That remark, delivered in an accent characteristic of the Texas-Oklahoma border that was his home country, reflected the wounds of an incident that brought him to national attention.

In 1981, Ronald Reagan intended to nominate Bradford as chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. The appointment seemed entirely appropriate: Bradford, a professor of English at the University of Dallas who wrote his doctoral dissertation under the Southern Agrarian and Fugitive Poet Donald Davidson, was a distinguished literary scholar. But Reagan’s wish to elevate him to the prestigious post did not stem solely from Bradford’s academic credentials. The president and he were acquaintances, and he had worked hard in Reagan’s campaign for the Republican presidential nomination. Influential conservatives such as Russell Kirk and Sen. Jesse Helms also knew and admired Bradford.

But a Southerner who stressed localism was not what neoconservatives such as Norman Podhoretz and the Kristols, *père et fils*, had in mind. They preferred William Bennett and, in typical fashion, did not confine themselves to magnifying the paltry virtues of their favorite, but launched smears against the president’s choice, dredging up Bradford’s 1972 support for George Wallace and—the issue that they stressed

interminably—his criticism of Abraham Lincoln. Their efforts to portray Bradford as some latter-day Theodore Bilbo, however unwarranted, proved effective. Bennett received the nod.

The campaign hurt Bradford greatly. But if he knew in advance that attacking Lincoln was so dangerous, why did he do it? Because far from being some crank spoiling the schoolchild consensus, Mel Bradford had principled reasons for his critique—and he deserves to be remembered as far more than a footnote to neocon machinations.

No one who met Bradford could easily forget him. He was strikingly tall and weighed about 350 pounds. He wore a white Stetson and would often look at people sideways, holding his head at an angle. On one occasion, he stopped a punch about an inch from someone’s face without looking at him. (In his youth, he had been an amateur boxer.) “That’s how I keep my graduate students in line!” he laughed.

Bradford began his career as a literary scholar, not a political theorist, and was perhaps best known for his work on William Faulkner. He had no truck with critical efforts to portray Faulkner as alienated from the South. To the contrary, he saw the novelist as thoroughly embedded within his native region. The trouble with other academic interpreters was that they failed to recognize their own prejudices of place: “Most of these mandarins teach in the universities of our Northeastern Megalopolis,” Bradford wrote. “Concerning the rest of the Republic, they have only conven-

tional responses proceeding not from reflection but from fear, ignorance, and animosity. That this other America, in all of its antique multiplicity, should foster or possess serious literature is for them a contradiction in terms.”

The relation of a writer to his local community and culture was a *leitmotif* of Bradford’s literary scholarship. Indeed, his stress on the importance of place in literature informed his political views. For Bradford, true politics grew out of local tradition. As he put it in his presidential address to the John Randolph Club in 1990, “The American regime ... is and forever shall be the result of a practice, a network of common experience and well-established institutions united in a common way.”

Bradford rejected Lincoln because he saw him as a revolutionary, intent on replacing the American Republic established by the Constitution with a centralized and leveling despotism. He thought that James McPherson, perhaps the most eminent pro-Union authority on the Civil War, was perfectly right to say in *Drawn With the Sword*,

Negative liberty was the dominant theme in early American history—freedom *from* constraints on individual rights imposed by a powerful state. The Bill of Rights is the classic expression of negative liberty, or Jeffersonian humanistic liberalism. The first ten amendments to the Constitution protect individual liberties by placing a strait-jacket of ‘shall nots’ on the federal