



Hustler

A president who discredits all he supports.

Two weeks after the election, a vote in the House of Representatives to impeach the president seemed most unlikely. But something unusual happened, something not anticipated either by the White House or the country at large. Republicans, many of whom had been treated with scorn or directly lied to by the president, recognized that they had the legal justification that they needed to act, if not the support of the people. And for a few short weeks, they had the opportunity to brand the man they disliked so much with a mark that would stay with him in the history books. It was irresistible, and they took it. Republicans formed a solid phalanx and ignored all reports of adverse public opinion. This display of fortitude was as unexpected as it is likely to be short-lived. If it were to become a habit, the Democrats would be in trouble indeed.

If the Republicans were emboldened, the Democrats stayed on offense—which is why it has been interesting times in Washington. Perhaps what enraged Democrats more than anything was the GOP's abandonment of its usual defensive crouch. Willing to stipulate in a motion of censure that the president had lied under oath and should face civil and criminal charges on leaving office, Democrats might at least have been expected to acknowledge the good faith of their opponents. But that would be asking too much. Moral indignation is the only posture they know, even while defending a moral repro-

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bate like Clinton. Their defense of victim groups (in the aggregate, now constituting close to a political majority) depends upon the assumption of a moral depravity in their opponents, and without it they would be finished.

Liberals must remain our moral tutors, or die. But Clinton has made their task much more difficult. That is one reason why, as Sally Quinn's article in the *Washington Post* showed, the Washington establishment so dislikes Clinton. At the time of his first inauguration, the Beltway adored the Clintons. Hillary, it turned out, was a friend of the wonderful Marian Wright Edelman. She in turn had taught the Clintons to disguise the case for more government as a defense of children. Unlike Jimmy Carter, Clinton had not run against "the Beltway." He was on the right side. He supported the Party of Government. But in the end he turned out to be almost unbelievably reckless. This was stupidity, which was unforgivable. By his very support, he threatened to bring discredit upon all the causes they had fought for all their lives.

Meanwhile, Clinton's approval ratings rose higher than ever. What are we to make of this? One possibility is that the sexual revolution has essentially triumphed in America. Phoned out of the blue by a pollster, many people will think, "I am not without sin," and construe disapproval of the president as an invitation to cast the first stone. I believe also that when the phone rings at home, and a pollster is on the line, many respondents think: "Somehow, this guy got my phone number...." They are put on the spot, construe questions as a snap civics test, and

rely on cues within the questions themselves to give the "right" answers. People really know very little about what is going on in Washington, as pollsters find out when they seek facts rather than opinions. But polls can be used to manufacture opinions, and that is often what they do.

Another interpretation of the popular response to Clinton is that the people want to be left alone and would rather hear as little as possible about Washington. The *Washington Post's* James Glassman construed the non-reaction to impeachment as a sign of "the growing irrelevance of national politics to our lives.... Washington is no longer where the action is." To sustain the fiction of relevance, in fact, the federal government is increasingly usurping such state and local functions as hiring police officers and teachers.

This "Go away!" might in particular be the reaction of the productive classes, who could be expected to oppose the president. As long as they have jobs and the government is not gouging too much from their paychecks, they seem to feel, little can be expected from busybody politicians. Clinton, oddly, may fill that bill. True he did nothing to help the economy, having inherited it. But he wins as long as he doesn't undermine it. It's striking that his approval rating dipped in the late summer and then rose again, exactly paralleling the movement of the Dow Jones average. This in turn fell sharply in response to fears that the Federal Reserve was crimping the money supply, and rose again once it was clear that Chairman Alan Greenspan was on the case.

On the other hand, the recipient classes, who live by politics, listen carefully to their ringleaders David Bonior, Barney Frank, John Lewis, David Obey, Charles Rangel, and Maxine Waters. They fully understand that the Democratic Party is

their meal ticket and livelihood. Bill Clinton is their man—the key cog in the machinery that extracts benefits from the pockets of the productive and puts it into their own. So they will support Clinton, come what may.

The resignation of Bob Livingston, on evidence furnished by *Hustler* publisher Larry Flynt and then re-transmitted by the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call*, is no doubt causing Republicans some concern. And we can be sure that any material that Flynt disseminates (gathered by offering large sums of money to informants) will be to the detriment of conservatives or Republicans only. Liberals, as exemplified by the Kennedy family, will be exempt from scrutiny.

Several years ago, just such a double standard was promulgated by Al Hunt, the *Wall Street Journal's* left-wing columnist (and former Washington bureau chief). Conservatives make a big deal of these moral issues, Hunt pointed out, but liberals don't. Frank Rich has now restated the case for a double standard in the *New York Times*: "By never promising us Boy Scouts in the Rose Garden or Rotunda, the Democrats have little to lose in this ugly game." Conservatives can be accused of hypocrisy if they violate their own standards, but those who disparage traditional morality or at least refrain from harping on it cannot be accused of violating anything. Thus the only moral failure to be recognized by the mainstream press is falling short of the standards one ostensibly supports.

In the wake of Larry Flynt, the media's most pompous watchdogs are already laying the groundwork for importing this philosophy into the canons of journalism. Tom Rosenstiel, director of the Project for Excellence in Journalism, said of Flynt: "While he's doing it for publicity, in his own twisted way he has a history of using embarrassment and sexuality to expose what he sees as hypocrisy." Thus is Larry Flynt welcomed into the Peter Zenger Room of the National Press Building. Frank Rich speaks to "those who just can't wait for Larry Flynt to expose the sex lives of some more GOP 'big fish.'" One wonders if Flynt, Betty Friedan, and Gloria Steinem will at some point hold a joint press conference in defense of the

president. Perhaps Barney Frank and Gerardo Rivera will join them.

If hypocrisy is the one newsworthy sin, Bill Clinton is of course its leading exponent. His whole public lip-biting act, tears ready to be wiped away when the cameras are in view, is based on insincerity. Most weeks he comes out of church with a Bible conspicuously on display, holding hands with his wife or his daughter, as though he really subscribed to the Christian and family values that he flouts, I won't say in private, but in the Oval Office itself. Talk about a church-going hypocrite! There is none greater than Slick Willie.

I should add that the insincere affectation of moral standards is as undesirable within the GOP as it is anywhere, and Flynt could indeed perform a public service by ridding us of GOP office-holders who are probably neither fit nor disposed to engage in the escalating combat of modern politics. By all means, then, let us really have a double standard. Moral Party on one side of the aisle, Immoral on the other. If the GOP were taken over by people who lived up to their marriage vows, while the Democrats were dominated by adulterers, whores, and perverts (who would perforce be hypocrites also), there's no doubt which side would prevail in the long run. No wonder Clinton and Jerrold Nadler begged Livingston to reconsider.

We should be on the alert when conservatives complain of a double standard. Always lurking beneath the alleged inconsistency is a single, consistent, undeviating standard. Feminists, Gloria Steinem, Larry Flynt, leftist newspaper columnists, pro-abortion fanatics, congressmen who complain about "the ayatollahs of the right" and "sexual McCarthyism" are in fact vigorously pursuing a single standard. And that is the destruction of Christian culture. That is what the "cultural war" is all about, and the sooner that is brought out into the open the better. To the extent that impeachment was a battle in the cultural war, it really was about sex.

What are we to make of Bill Clinton? As Sam Donaldson said, he leaves a trail of human wreckage behind him wherever he goes. It's appropriate that he is being

defended by *Hustler*, for he is a hustler himself, an unusual operator in politics, not because he lies but because he really doesn't seem to mind at all if you know it. He feels no trace of embarrassment, no prick of conscience. In this, as Robert Bork has pointed out (*TAS*, November 1998), he conforms to the clinical definition of the sociopath. So closely does he fit the profile that suspicions are bound to be aroused by his one deviation from the norm: Sociopaths have juvenile criminal records. Does Clinton? (Such records are concealed by juvenile courts, and as governor he could have had them destroyed.)

With his charm and his glib tongue he was made for politics and he seems to have calculatedly entered the arena on the side of the "have-nots." By the 1960's, he knew which side the intellectuals and the media were on and it wasn't difficult to guess who had the upper hand in the propaganda wars. Hillary, on the other hand, having worked for Barry Goldwater, seems to have experienced a real conversion to the left. She has the warrior's mentality, operating on behalf of a revolution which has come close to prevailing over the forces of reaction. She seems to believe sincerely that untold wickedness and evil will spread across the land if the class with which she was formerly allied is not muzzled by an activist, suspicious, all-powerful government.

Forecasting Clinton's future has been wide of the mark in the past, but today it seems likely that he will beat the rap in the Senate. Then he will look for something that can be called legacy, and to achieve that he may move toward the left on some issues (gun control) and away from it on others (Social Security). There has been no historical precedent for a Democratic president in his position—that is, prevented by the 22nd Amendment from seeking re-election. He is no longer beholden to the usual pressure groups (gun owners, labor unions, the NEA) whose united opposition can make nomination or election impossible. It's possible that he will accept a measure of Social Security privatization—a reform that Al Gore (tethered to the unions as long as he seeks the presidency) will not touch on his own. But that is another story. ❁

FALSE WITNESS

CLINTON FRIEND VERNON JORDAN SWEARS HE TOLD THE TRUTH TO KENNETH STARR'S GRAND JURY. SO WHY ARE THERE SO MANY HOLES IN HIS STORY?

BYRON YORK

Unlike others who testified before the grand jury investigating the Monica Lewinsky scandal, Vernon Jordan never shied away from reporters gathered outside the federal courthouse in Washington. Each time he appeared, President Clinton's close friend and confidant walked to the microphones and emphasized just one point: that he told the truth to Kenneth Starr's prosecutors and the grand jury. "I answered all of their questions truthfully and completely, to the best of my ability," Jordan said after his first day of testimony last March. "That's the truth, that's the whole truth, that's nothing but the truth," he told reporters after his second appearance a few days later. And after his last day before the grand jury, Jordan announced, "When I was a kid in Sunday school, I learned a verse: 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free.' I have come here five times, and I have told the truth."

But did he? On the courthouse steps, Jordan refused to discuss the specifics of his testimony; it was only after the House of Representatives released it last September that the public got a chance to learn what he actually said inside the grand jury room. And a careful examination of that testimony—889 pages of transcripts plus hundreds of pages of supporting documents—raises serious questions about Jordan's story.

For example, Jordan denied any involvement in preparing the affidavit in which Lewinsky swore she did not have a sexual relationship with the president—even though Lewinsky remembered editing specific portions of the affidavit after discussing them with him. Jordan also testified he could not remember a

breakfast meeting at which, Lewinsky said, he advised her to conceal evidence of her affair with the president. And he testified he could not even remember the first time he met Lewinsky—or why he went to see Clinton shortly after the meeting.

Beyond that, Jordan said he could not recall dozens of conversations with the president during critical moments in the Lewinsky affair. In the tense days of January 1998 when the president gave his deposition in the Paula Jones case, Jordan made a long series of telephone calls to the White House and to Lewinsky—and swore he could not remember why he made any of them. He had lunch with top Clinton aide Bruce Lindsey on the day the Lewinsky story broke on the Internet—and claimed they discussed their children and the weather. The next day, he dropped by the Oval Office—and remembered a conversation with the president that was largely about family and golf.

On more than one occasion, such testimony led to strained moments in the courtroom as prosecutors grew openly skeptical of Jordan's version of events. Now his testimony is available for all to see. And, taken as a whole, it leaves the reader with good reason to suspect that Jordan, the widely-respected lawyer, member of blue-chip corporate boards, and Washington wise man, lied to protect both himself and his good friend, Bill Clinton.

CALLING MR. JORDAN

Jordan's contention that he first learned about Monica Lewinsky in a phone call from Clinton secretary Betty Currie has long been a staple of the Lewinsky story. During his first grand jury appearance, Jordan testified that Currie called him in early December 1997. "She said, 'Mr. Jordan, there's a former White House intern, her name is Monica Lewinsky and she would like and I am requesting your help in finding her a job in New York,'" Jordan told the grand jury. "And I said, 'I'm happy to be helpful.'"

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