



Double-Down POTUS

BY KATHLEEN PARKER
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WASHINGTON — Americans are justified in feeling numbed by the car alarm of Washington politics. Every now and then we get a reprieve from the noise. Something breaks through: a sex scandal, a gaffe, a surprise resignation. Already the words “Petraeus affair” have been supplanted by “DeMint’s departure.”

Sometimes our tropes get muddled. Commenting on the “fiscal cliff” negotiations, Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy told reporters: “The president now has to engage. I think the sex [catches himself] ... the next 72 hours are critical.”

Noisiest is the “fiscal cliff,” which will be looming at least until Christmas or even New Year’s. What do most Americans know about it? Not much except that Washington, as usual, isn’t doing what’s necessary to prevent it.

The cliff negotiations between President Obama and House Speaker John Boehner have taken on the aspect of a game of chicken. Boehner needs spending cuts; Obama needs revenue. America needs both.

Who will blink first before we plummet off the edge into automatic tax increases for all, government spending cuts and a probable recession?

After so many years of partisan intransigence, it’s easy enough to assume that all parties are equally guilty, but this time Obama is driving the herd. Elections have consequences, as the president keeps reminding us. By this, he apparently means that he will have things his way, the rest of the country be damned.

Boehner’s good-faith attempts at a deal, offering new revenue through reforms as well as leaning toward some limited tax-rate increases, have been met with mockery. Obama’s laughable idea of a balanced deal includes taking control of the debt ceiling and doubling revenue demands, while offering little in the way of spending cuts.

In conversations around Washington immediately after the election, Republicans wondered what kind of president Obama would become in his second term. Experienced and confident, would he be the transformational leader so many Americans had hoped he would be once upon a time? This depends on one’s definition of transitional — whether Obama would be a kumbaya post-partisan president or one who reorders the country according to progressive ideology.

His political history, albeit brief, provided the answer even if some failed to notice. Contrary to his campaign rhetoric, the president is not a conciliator but an instigator who habitually doubles down. He may not be a socialist, an accusation he swats away with a bored chuckle, but he is a big-government guy. He believes that government can do dramatic things



Kathleen PARKER

that benefit a greater swath of society if he can just wrest away some of the lucre from the wealthiest citizens.

Obama was hardly coquettish back in 2008 in describing his vision to that nice plumber fellow, Joe Whatshisname, when he said he thought some of America’s wealth needed to be redistributed.

While many on the right became apoplectic at those words, others found it easy to imagine that Obama didn’t mean redistribution through confiscation, but rather through a more equitable arrangement of opportunities and rewards in a world where very clearly too much money was concentrated among too few.

Billionaires and tycoons who have gotten so very rich by gaming a system that favors insiders are loved by few. Why shouldn’t they share more to minimize others’ suffering? How many yachts, jets and homes does one need?

Turns out: Obama really did mean confiscation and redistribution, and this promise is the “gift” that got him elected and got Mitt Romney pilloried. Of course Obama was re-elected at least in part because so much of America now is a constituency of the needy. This is not an indictment of people who have suffered through a terrible economy and job losses. It is simply a fact that many people need a helping hand right now and Obama’s is extended.

By contrast, Republicans — and especially Romney — seemed merely to be part of the ongoing problem. Viewed as withholders, they were pathetically inarticulate about how conservative fiscal policies could make all boats rise. Now into holiday season, Obama is lighting trees and wishing everyone Merry Christmas, while the GOP grinces keep saying no.

The problems Obama inherited can’t be denied. Nor can it be denied that once he felt Republicans were going to block his agenda, he doubled down. All signs now indicate that Obama’s transformational presidency will not have Americans holding hands and singing over s’mores.

If we go over the cliff, Republicans will be blamed. And Obama, appearing virtuous while figuring he has four more years to patch things up, will get the middle-class revenues he needs while effectively neutralizing the enemy.

Ho-ho-ho.

CORRECTION: In a previous column, I suggested that the assistant of secretary of state for African affairs oversees U.S. relations with Libya. In fact, though Libya is part of Africa, the country falls under the diplomatic umbrella of the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

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Bonding Fifty Years Later

BY BILL O'REILLY
Creators Syndicate

If you really want to understand the vast changes that have occurred in America over the past 50 years, all you have to do is watch James Bond. Back in 1962, the first Bond movie, “Dr. No,” was released, catapulting Sean Connery to international stardom. Even President Kennedy expressed admiration for Ian Fleming’s fictional British secret agent.

Connery’s Bond was ultra-suave but amazingly politically incorrect. The guy smoked constantly, drank, gambled and womanized without remorse. He was a rogue and couldn’t care less what anyone thought. He was also brutal, liberally exercising his license to kill in the cause of justice, of course.

Now we live in a new age, and we have a different James Bond: Daniel Craig. His Bond is a much more sensitive soul than was Connery’s. In the 23rd Bond film, “Skyfall,” Craig rarely smiles, goes about his business with grim determination and looks like he’s in the gym quite often. While Connery’s Bond spent his spare time chasing ladies and drinking martinis, Craig’s is apparently training for the triathlon.

However, the biggest difference between Connery and Craig is that the former seemed to be having fun racing around the world doing the bidding of the British government. Craig does not seem to be having a lot of laughs. In fact, Craig is a major brooder, and so is his boss, played by Judi Dench. Watching these two have a conversation is like watching Dr. Phil yell at some guy who just abandoned his family.

Nevertheless, “Skyfall” is a huge moneymaker, especially overseas. The formula is this: Blow things up every 10 minutes. It’s kinda like the old Elvis movies where The King broke into song every eight minutes no



Bill O'REILLY

matter what was happening in the storyline. They needed to fill up an album, so Elvis sang on cue.

Perhaps the biggest difference between “Dr. No” and “Skyfall” is the subordinate casting. Ursula Andress was the femme fatale in “Dr. No.” She spent the entire film in a bikini except for about three minutes when she wore a robe. Ursula, a Swiss actress, did not say very much. But she liked James; that much was clear.

The ladies in “Skyfall” also like James. I think. But they were shuttled in and out of the film so quickly, it was hard to tell. Dealing with the opposite sex cuts into Craig’s brooding time, and we can’t have that.

Also, the villains say something about our changing world. Joseph Wiseman played “Dr. No.” Yes, he was a mean guy, but he wasn’t very menacing. The worst thing he did was give a henchman a tarantula to put in Bond’s bed. That could never happen today because PETA would picket.

In “Skyfall,” Javier Bardem is the bad guy, and the script implies that he may be gay. But it’s not really clear. What is certain is that Javier is a computer wiz bent on killing Dench. While Dr. No wanted to dominate space, Bardem simply wants a little revenge for a past slight, a hallmark of many bloggers.

My sentiment lies with Connery. Craig is better than Pierce Brosnan, but he doesn’t have Connery’s charisma. The old guy wins.

Veteran TV news anchor Bill O'Reilly is host of the Fox News show “The O'Reilly Factor” and author of the book “Pinheads and Patriots: Where You Stand in the Age of Obama.” To find out more about Bill O'Reilly, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate web page at www.creators.com. This column originates on the website www.billoreilly.com.

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OPINION | OTHER THOUGHTS

S.D. Should Review Incarceration Strategy

ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS (Dec. 6): In 1977, South Dakota’s prison population was 546. In 34 years, it has increased more than six-fold to 3,600 inmates. Our incarceration rate is the highest in a six-state area.

From a purely financial point of view, our prison system is costing taxpayers far too much money. And we’re not talking just the cost of housing and supervising inmates. There are the hidden costs associated with imprisonment. If the inmate was a family breadwinner, loss of that income could press the family into public welfare.

Because our facilities are quickly becoming overcrowded, building two new facilities, one for women and one for men, is looming on the horizon. Taking finances out of the picture, advanced societies do not build more prisons, but build stronger families and communities.

By placing the locus of control over minor offenders at county level, the guilty person remains in his or her community. And the dollars spent to rehabilitate the offender also remain in the community.

It wasn’t that long ago when people guilty of smoking a single marijuana cigarette were given a five-year sentence. More realistic sentencing needs to be a high priority. Is an inmate less likely to reoffend if he serves 12 months in prison rather than eight?

The purpose of prison is retribution, prevention and protection for society. Put the violent offenders where they belong. Offer treatment options for the rest.

Does this mean that we have more crime than other states? Not by a long shot. What it means is that we need to re-evaluate how we are reforming our scofflaws.

That the current South Dakota criminal justice system needs a major overhaul is a no-brainer.

TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press
Today is Monday, Dec. 10, the 345th day of 2012. There are 21 days left in the year.

Today’s Highlight in History: On Dec. 10, 1962, “Lawrence of Arabia,” David Lean’s epic film starring Peter O’Toole as British military officer T.E. Lawrence, had its royal gala premiere in London, with Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip, in attendance.

On this date: In 1520, Martin Luther publicly burned the papal edict demanding that he recant, or face excommunication.

In 1787, Thomas H. Gallaudet, a pioneer of educating the deaf, was born in Philadelphia.

In 1817, Mississippi was admitted as the 20th state of the Union.

In 1861, the Confederacy admitted Kentucky as it recognized a pro-Southern shadow state government that was acting without the authority of the pro-Union government in Frankfort.

In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt became the first American to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, for helping mediate an end to the Russo-Japanese War.

In 1931, Jane Addams became the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize; the co-recipient was Nicholas Murray Butler.

In 1948, the U.N. General Assembly adopted its Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

In 1950, Ralph J. Bunche was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the first black American to receive the award.

In 1964, Martin Luther King Jr. received his Nobel Peace Prize.

In 1967, singer Otis Redding, 26, and six others were killed when their plane crashed into Wisconsin’s Lake Monona.

In 1972, baseball’s American League adopted the designated hitter rule on an experimental basis for three years.

In 1987, President Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev concluded three days of summit talks in Washington.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush selected William H. Donaldson, an investment banker with ties to Wall Street and the Bush family, as chairman of the besieged Securities and Exchange Com-

mission. Former President Jimmy Carter accepted the Nobel Peace Prize for his diplomacy in the Middle East in the ’70s.

Five years ago: Suspended NFL star Michael Vick was sentenced by a federal judge in Richmond, Va., to 23 months in prison for bankrolling a dogfighting operation and killing dogs that underperformed. Madison Square Garden and New York Knicks coach Isiah Thomas reached an \$11.5 million settlement of a sexual harassment case brought by former team executive Anucha Browne Sanders. Cristina Fernandez was sworn in as Argentina’s first elected female president. Former Vice President Al Gore accepted the Nobel Peace Prize with a call for humanity to rise up against a looming climate crisis and stop waging war on the environment.

One year ago: Tens of thousands of Russians staged anti-government protests, charging electoral fraud and demanding an end to Vladimir Putin’s rule. Robert Griffin III beat out preseason favorite Andrew Luck for the Heisman Trophy.

Today’s Birthdays: Former Agriculture Secretary Clayton Yeutter is 82. Actor Tommy Kirk is 71. Actress Fionnula Flanagan is 71. Pop singer Chad Stuart (Chad and Jeremy) is 71. Actress-singer Gloria Loring is 66. Pop-funk musician Walter “Clyde” Orange (The Commodores) is 66. Rhythm-and-blues singer Ralph Tavares is 64. Rhythm-and-blues singer Jessica Cleaves (Friends of Distinction) is 64. Country singer Johnny Rodriguez is 61. Actress Susan Dey is 60. Former Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich is 56. Jazz musician Paul Hardcastle is 55. Actor-director Kenneth Branagh is 52. Actress Nia Peeples is 51. TV chef Bobby Flay is 48. Rock singer-musician J Mascis is 47. Country singer Kevin Sharp is 42. Rock musician Scot Alexander (Dishwalla) is 41. Actress-comedian Arden Myrin is 39. Rock musician Meg White (The White Stripes) is 38. Rapper Kuniva (D12) is 37. Violinist Sarah Chang is 32. Rock musician Noah Harmon (Airborne Toxic Event) is 31. Actress Raven-Symone is 27.

Thought for Today: “To have news value is to have a tin can tied to one’s tail.” — T.E. Lawrence (1888-1935).

FROM THE BIBLE

Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man. Luke 2:52. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

YOUR LETTERS

Deadly Profits

Rex Alberts, Yankton
Our hoodwinked, do-nothing Congress makes drug companies richer. Those dying from prescription drugs do not plan to die but neither do those dying in car wrecks. Statistics show that more people die from prescription drugs than from either hard drugs or car wrecks. From these two, someone may go to prison, but from prescription drugs, the drug companies just go to the bank more often with their millions.

Drug companies profit every day by the deaths they cause. Serious side effects or death are often approved by the mismanaged FDA.

These companies even advertise pre-sex pills during news hours for all ages. This may at least increase the thousands of teen age pregnancies and abortions — one million each year. These ads present a fun and giggle sport.

Most civilized societies would not allow such exploitation of children and youth by corporate greed — First Amendment or not.

What happens to you if you kill someone every 19 minutes for money? That does not include the million abortions yearly.

Highway Safety

Trooper Trent Heurtz, HP 147, North Sioux City
South Dakota Highway Patrol
December is finally here which means Christmas is just around the corner. This holiday season means increased traffic on the roadway which results in the higher probability of being in a traffic crash.

The best defense you have to limit injury and save your life in a traffic crash is to wear your seat belt. It only takes a second to buckle up but that second could save your life. Don’t forget to make sure children under the age of 5 are properly secured in a child safety seat.

As the traffic increases on the roads, so will the visibility of the South Dakota Highway Patrol. If you are not wearing your seatbelt or are exceeding the speed limit, expect on getting a ticket. If you are drinking and driving, plan on going to jail. We want to make sure everyone gets to their destination safely and to do that we will be stepping up our enforcement efforts.

You can help make the roads safer by slowing down, paying attention, wearing your seat belt and by not driving after you have been drinking. Together we can make sure everyone has an enjoyable and safe holiday.

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