

Crane asks, *Is Hillary a neocon?*

Cato Analysts Take a Skeptical Look at the Candidates



“Under her plan, she actually wants to put more people into Medicare. That’s a program already facing a \$50 trillion deficit. That’s like cramming a few more passengers onto the *Titanic*.”

— MICHAEL D. TANNER
slams Clinton’s healthcare plan,
Glenn Beck, September 17, 2007

“If you can make a profit in this economy by putting something on the market, the government doesn’t need to put a gun to your head.”

— JERRY TAYLOR
takes the candidates to task
for advocating subsidies to ethanol,
20/20, May 4, 2007



“Mitt Romney wants to cut the corporate tax rate down to 20 percent, which would be a fabulous cut for American business. That would expand production here in the United States. That’s good for everyone.”

— CHRIS EDWARDS
Glenn Beck, January 23, 2008

When P. J. O’Rourke, H. L. Mencken research fellow at the Cato Institute, spoke at the 20th Annual Benefactor Summit on February 9, it didn’t take him long to settle into his comic groove. It being only a few days after Super Tuesday, he had plenty of source material.

“Rudy Giuliani’s lofty campaign promise is that there will be a tragedy every week.” “Everyone respects John McCain. He’s tough. He’s consistent. He’s wrong.” As for Mitt Romney, he “should go back into business.”

Characterizing Barack Obama as having the “Disney factor,” he said America seems to have forgotten he’s still only a politician. “Politicians are like the Seven Dwarves. They’re short—short on ethics, short on experience, and short on common sense,” he said to roars from Cato Sponsors. “But we keep thinking one of these dwarves is

going to save our snow white butt.” Lamenting that Bill Richardson, Joe Biden, and Chris Dodd—“the three Democrats actually qualified to be president”—had exited the race, he expressed the hope that John Edwards (and his hair) and Hillary Clinton (and her husband) do the same.

P. J. O’Rourke is not alone among Cato scholars in having no horse in this race. Ed Crane, founder and president of the Cato Institute, doesn’t much care for John McCain’s saber-rattling, and reserves special scorn for his free-speech-restricting campaign finance regulations, as he pointed out most recently in a January *Examiner* interview. But the alternatives may be worse. In a *Financial Times* op-ed “Is Hillary Clinton a Neocon?” Crane asserted that Hillary Clinton fundamentally rejects the American liberal tradition. Instead of pro-

tecting life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Clinton would give Americans “national goals”—and socialized healthcare.

Meanwhile Barack Obama, despite his billing, does not represent “change” either, says David Boaz, executive vice president at the Cato Institute. “When you strip away all the verbiage, what is left is a shorter version of Hillary Clinton’s speeches,” he said at a February 13 book launch party for *The Politics of Freedom*. Obama would provide a subsidy, a handout, a program, or a transfer to every identifiable interest group in society, said Boaz. For all the talk about rising above partisanship and transcending polarization, what Obama is really saying is that as president he—and not Hillary—would be able to “overcome America’s resistance to big government.” Meanwhile, Will Wilkinson, research fellow at the Cato Institute, had Obama



“There’s nothing wrong with populism, if you’re popularly promoting less government. And I so have some sympathy for [Huckabee’s] national sales tax proposal to get rid of the entire Internal Revenue code. It’d be a difficult thing to do.”

— DAN MITCHELL
The Big Story with John Gibson,
 Fox News, January 15, 2008

“[McCain] really doesn’t seem to like the First Amendment. Hillary Clinton calls herself a government junkie and I think that pretty well tells you all you need to know. Barack Obama talks about wanting to end business as usual but when he lists what he’s actually going to do, it’s exactly the same thing Hillary Clinton wants.”

— DAVID BOAZ
Tucker, February 19, 2008



“The idea was to pit power against power so that no one locus of power would become overbearing. Unfortunately, in the years since the Constitution was written, more and more power has moved to Washington.”

— ROGER PILON
 saying Republican candidates are only paying lip service to federalism,
Special Report with Brit Hume,
 Fox News, August 13, 2007

pegged as far back as 2005. Writing in the *American Spectator* on a June 4, 2005, Obama commencement address at Knox College, Wilkinson praised Obama’s oratory, but said, when it comes to substance, he and his supporters must face the fact that “the New Deal ... has not been new for 70 years now.”

Cato scholars are always looking for new ways to publicize their research, and campaign commentary represents a great opportunity to do just that. In a February 29 appearance on the Fox News Channel, Daniel T. Griswold, director of the Center for Trade Policy Studies, defended NAFTA in the face of calls from Obama and Clinton to amend it. The decline in manufacturing long predated NAFTA, he asserted, and was caused by the American economy’s transition from heavy industry to an information-based service economy. “It’s a

cruel illusion to say that if we go in and tinker with NAFTA that there will be some kind of industrial renaissance.” Over the past 12 months, Cato senior fellow Michael D. Tanner has appeared on the *CBS Evening News*, *ABC News Now*, *CNN’s Glenn Beck*, *Reuters TV*, and scores of radio programs to talk about the problems with government-imposed health insurance mandates and to remind viewers that, no matter who becomes president, Social Security’s pending insolvency must be addressed.

Gene Healy, senior editor at the Cato Institute, is not content to critique any one candidate or policy platform. In *The Cult of the Presidency*, he takes on the entire office. Though American political culture is often deemed “cynical,” Healy says that by contrast the public is immersed in a romance with the imperial presidency—it is “pining

for Camelot,” as he puts it. This love affair is not harmless, for when the public expects the president to solve national-scale problems, the president will usurp additional powers to meet that demand. The result is grand, unconstitutional, failed policies like No Child Left Behind—not to mention our entitlement legacy of Social Security and Medicare. A major part of Healy’s April-May book tour is to remind Americans that it wasn’t always this way. The Framers saw the president as a constitutionally constrained chief executive with an important, but limited job: to defend the country when attacked, check Congress when it violates the Constitution, enforce the law, and little else. Healy points out that the presidential office stood much the way the Founders envisioned as late as the last years of the 19th century. ■