

## Obama stump speech strategy of conciliation considered harmful

Submitted by [lambert](#) on Fri, 12/28/2007 - 2:14pm

### Departments:

[Department of How Stupid Do They Think We Are?](#) [1]

### Thread:

[Dem on Dem Violence](#) [2]

### Tags:

[Barack Obama](#) [3]

[progressives](#) [4]

[Just cross-posted to [Kos](#) [5]. How about a recommendation? And welcome, [Eschatonians](#) [6], [Paul Krugman](#) [7], [Digby](#) [8], [Andrew Tobias](#) [9], and [Sadly, No](#) [10] readers. And [Avedon](#) [11], you know I do.]

[And readers, if you want others to read this post, you can use the Digg or Reddit buttons below to recommend it.]

\* \* \*

ONE CURRENT PERMATHREAD on Big Orange is that [Krugman](#) [12] and Obama are feuding or having a [vendetta](#) [13]. Which, when you take a step back, is bizarre. That [movement conservatives](#) [14] and Villagers like stone Bush enabler William [Kristol](#) [15], like David [Brooks](#) [16], [Broderella](#) [17], and Andrew [Sullivan](#) [18] are all good with Obama isn't even mentioned in passing by [Obama's fan base](#) [19]. And yet those same enthusiasts spend inordinate amounts of time vilifying Paul Krugman, a true progressive who was there for us from the earliest dark days of the Bush regime.

Curious. What's really happening?

Krugman doesn't have a problem with Obama; Krugman has a problem with what Obama believes about the relationship between politics and economics. Moreover, Krugman makes a case that Obamaphiles have yet to confront and refute. [There is considerable commentary from Obama supporters on this thread. Readers may judge whether Krugman's case is refuted, engaged, or even understood. --*Lambert*] But for those who came in late -- that is, those for whom Obama might be [the very first](#) [20] political figure they've supported or with whom they've identified -- I need to set the table by summarizing the political economy of the last thirty years or so. (I'm trying to write like an economist here, and I'm not one, but I'll give it my best shot.)

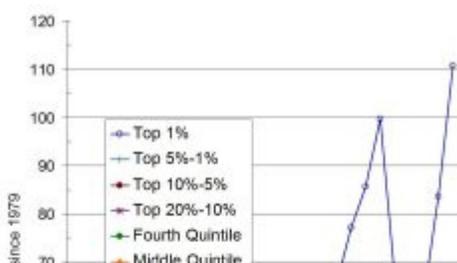
It's conventional wisdom (says Krugman) among many economic schools, not just the left, that economics drives politics, and not the other way round. Economics is seen as more fundamental

than politics, certainly more fundamental than electoral politics. Economic trends are deep tides, and political changes are mere waves, froth on the surface.

Yet if you look at the history of the last thirty or so years, it seems (says Krugman) that conventional wisdom has been stood on its head, and that politics drove economics.

And that is our history as we know it. Starting in the 1970s, at about the time of the Lewis Powell memo [21], an interlocking network of right wing billionaires [22] and theocrats [23] began to fund the institutions whose dominance we take for granted today: The American Enterprise Institute, the Heritage Foundation, The Family Research Council, the Federalist Society, the Brookings Institute (over time), and on and on. During this period, College Republican operatives like Rove, Abramoff, and Gary Bauer became important figures in this network, as did the ex-Trotskyite neocons [24] who broke away from the Scoop Jackson wing of the Democratic Party. The period was also marked by the steady retreat of the press from reporting, under twin pressures from the right "working the refs" [25], as Eric Alterman put it, and winger billionaire owners slashing news coverage in favor of "entertainment," and by the steady advance of Rush Limbaugh on talk radio and, later, by Matt Drudge [26] on the web. And if you got hooked into that network, you got the cradle-to-grave protection typical of socialism: You always had a job, whether as a "fellow" or "scholar" at the AEI, a shouting head on Crossfire, as a columnist [27], as a contractor, as a political appointee or staffer, or as a lobbyist, and so on and on and on. You always got funding. You were made [28]. Just for the sake of having an easy label for this dense network of institutions, operatives, ideologues, and Republican Party figures, let's call it the Conservative Movement (instead of HRC [29]'s\* Vast Right Wing Conspiracy, since it's not really a conspiracy, except possibly an emergent [30] one. The billionaires don't -- except for Scaife during the Arkansas project, or Rupert Murdoch playing editor -- generally pick up the phone and give orders; rather, they manage the Conservative Movement like an investment portfolio of entertainment properties; some start-ups (Politico [31]), some stars (FOX), some cash cows (Limbaugh), some dogs (American Spectator)). Slowly but surely, well funded and well organized Conservatives pushed their ideas from unthinkable, to radical, to acceptable, to sensible, to popular, and finally into policy, in a process described as The Overton Window [32]. As surely and ruthlessly, progressive ideas were marginalized, and then silenced altogether. And spending what it took, the winger billionaires used the Conservative Movement to restructure politics, and having restructured politics, economics. To their economic benefit.

For these billionaires, the ROI of the Conservative Movement is absolutely spectacular. At the micro level, for example, if you want to create an aristocracy, then you want to eliminate any taxes on inherited wealth, despite what Warren Buffet [33] or Bill Gates might say about the values entailed by that project. So, the Conservative Movement goes to work, develops and successfully propagates the "death tax" talking point (meme, frame) -- which they may even believe in, as if sincerity were the point -- and voila! Whoever thought that "family values" would translate to "feudal values" and dynastic wealth? At the macro level, their ROI has been spectacular as well. Real wages have been flat for a generation; unions have been disempowered; the powers of corporations greatly increased; government has become an agent for the corporations, rather than a protector of the people; the safety net has been shredded; and so on and on and on.



succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of the billionaires who invested in it. Despite the remarkable gains that we have made in productivity, *they* creamed most of it off.

Today, in 2007, the Conservative Movement is in runaway mode, like a reactor with no control rods or a car with no brakes. Ideologically, the Movement began as a drive to roll back the New Deal in reaction (see Peter Arno's wonderful *New Yorker* cartoon nearby) to the hated FDR\*\*. But now, with no checks, the winger billionaires have begun to roll us farther back to the Darwinian conditions of 1890s Gilded Age, and, with the destruction of habeas corpus, roll us all the way back to the time, before the Magna Carta, when the king's word was law. Any limitation, any limitation at all, on the corporate powers that create the income streams from which the billionaires feed must be removed; hence the nonsensical idea that corporations, as fictive persons, have free speech; hence the aggrandizement of executive power, with huge and secret money flows to well-connected firms; hence the destruction of Constitutional government. (All this takes place against a background of looting and asset stripping on an imperial, Roman scale, of which the "subprime" "crisis <sup>[35]</sup>" is but the latest of many examples <sup>[36]</sup>.)



The bottom line (says Krugman): *Politics drives economics*, and not the other way round.

So, *what kind of politics* do we progressives need?

We come to Obama.

Here are the two money paragraphs from the almost <sup>[38]</sup> always eloquent Obama's latest (and truly brilliant) stump speech. Time's Mark Halperin had it first <sup>[39]</sup>:

[OBAMA] You know that we can't afford four more years of the same divisive food fight in Washington that's about scoring political points instead of solving problems; that's about tearing your opponents down instead of lifting this country up. ...

It's change that won't just come from more anger at Washington or turning up the heat on Republicans. There's no shortage of anger and bluster and bitter partisanship out there. We don't need more heat. We need more light. I've learned in my life that you can stand firm in your principles while still reaching out to those who might not always agree with you. And although the Republican operatives in Washington might not be interested in hearing what we have to say, I think Republican and independent voters outside of Washington are. That's the once-in-a-generation opportunity we have in this election.

I believe!

But. Not. I hope I've been able to persuade you, through a quick look at the political economy of the last 30 years, that what's going on in politics today is a little bit more complicated -- and much more important -- than a "divisive food fight." Indeed, the very phrase itself trivializes both the scale of the problem, and the efforts of those progressives who are fighting for solutions.

All progressives--and most Democrats--agree on the "once-in-a-generation" opportunity and the stakes. That's not the issue. The issue is: *What kind of politics* can turn the opportunity into permanent, progressive change? *What kind of politics* can drive economics? Because that's what it will take to achieve even universal health care. We're supposed to be from the reality-based community, and we're supposed to rely on the hard-won Enlightenment tools of evidence and reasoning, and here I think Obama's stump speech strategy comes up short. (I'll give my objections, and summarize, tendentiously but I hope not unfairly, the responses I've gotten from Obama's supporters to points I've made during a recent sojourn on Big Orange.)

**Obama presents himself as post-partisan, but partisan politics are needed.** The "food fight," obviously a partisan food fight, is purest Equivalation. The Democrats didn't break the world record for filibusters when they were in the minority; but the Republicans just did. And when the press covered the (very few) Democratic filibusters, they called them "filibusters." And when the press covers the (never-ending) Republican filibusters, the word "filibuster" gets magically transmuted into the "60 votes needed to pass." And last I checked, Democrats were allowing anybody to come to their election rallies, but Bush was screening his to make sure only Republicans attended. This is the Conservative Movement in action. Sure, there's a "food fight," but most of the food that's in the air is coming from one side of the cafeteria!

So why on earth would Obama think that "tearing down" the Conservative Movement and "lifting this country up" are *opposites*? They're the same! And we need the kind of politics that treats them that way. When the Swift Boat guys smeared Kerry, *Kerry should have "torn them down."*

Beating Bush in 2004 sure would have "lifted up" the country! Back in the McCarthy era, Margaret Chase Smith "*tore down*" Joe McCarthy with her Declaration of Conscience, and that sure "lifted up" the country! Sam Ervin "*tore down*" Richard Nixon and got started impeaching him. That lifted up the country too--'til Gerald Ford let us down, anyway.

More importantly, we've given some idea, in the short history above, of how powerful, and how entrenched, the Conservative Movement has become in official Washington (the Village [40]).\*\*\* If an election is held in 2008, and if a Democrat is elected, and is allowed to take office, and that Democrat is Obama, the Conservative Movement, and its billionaire funders, are not going to change their playbook. Why would they change what has worked out well for them? They will go right back and run the same plays that they ran when the last Democrat was elected (see Appendix I). The day that Obama touches a hair on the head of some Regent University grad who's rewriting the work of a NASA scientist on climate change from a Christianist perspective, the howls of outrage about "hatred," and "liberal fascism," and "authoritarianism of the left," and -- bless their hearts -- the separation of powers are going to begin, the howling is not going to let up, and the Conservative Movement and the press are going to amplify it until Obama either caves or figures out the state legislature in Springfield was Triple-A ball, not the show, grabs a bat, and gets their attention by administering an old-fashioned beat down. (Meanwhile, the Christianist will be all over the teebee, and if they pass, they'll get a book deal. You know the drill.)

Progressive policies -- this election, health insurance, above all -- will be vehemently opposed by the Conservative Movement and the winger billionaires *because progressive policies are not in their economic interests*. In fact, they've been working for 30 years against progressive policies, and have been well paid to do so. They won't change. Why would they? So, there's going to be a food fight. Don't we need the kind of politics that's going to win the fight, rather than deplore it?

So, what would the countervailing force to the Conservative Movement be? What kind of politics? Well, one answer would be *party building*. Use the 2008 mandate--assuming Obama doesn't destroy any mandate for policy by tacking, Sister Souljah style, to the (vanishing) center--to build stronger, more progressive party institutions. Use control over the legislature for -- *this time* -- real oversight, and destroy the Republican brand and cripple the Conservative Movement. All we need to do is show the truth! Enforce subpoenas, and destroy the Republican brand and cripple the Conservative Movement. Re-professionalize the Justice Department, and it follows as the night the day that plenty of Republican criminals are prosecuted, which destroys the Republican brand and cripples the Conservative Movement.

Tearing down the Conservative Movement is exactly the kind of politics that's needed to lift the country up!

**Obama wants to "reach out," but that strategy has already been tried.** Obama says he wants to "reach out" to Republicans. But Reid and Pelosi "reached out" to Republicans, and that strategy was a miserable failure.

Reid and Pelosi "reached out" to Republicans by taking impeachment off the table.

Reid and Pelosi "reached out" to Republicans by not using the power of the purse either to end the war or to curb executive power.

Read and Pelosi "reached out" to Republicans through FISA "reform" by trying to give Bush more power than even the Republicans tried to give him, when they were in the majority.

In fact, Reid and Pelosi "reached out" to Republicans by caving and capitulating to them on just about any issue you can name.

And what did we get? We got nothing. We didn't get the legislation, because the Republicans filibustered everything in sight. And we didn't get any oversight, because Reid and Pelosi were so busy "reaching out" that they didn't have time to enforce the subpoenas and ended up writing Sternly Worded Letters instead.

So, when Obama reaches out, how would that be any different from the reaching out that Reid and Pelosi already did? What the Obama fan base says is that, since we won't get to a filibuster-proof supermajority, a strategy of conciliation makes sense; they plan to pick off Republicans in onesies and twosies to pass needed legislation. Unfortunately, as we've seen, that's what Reid and Pelosi already tried, so why would we try it again? But, say the fans, Obama has a track record: Look at the [Transparency in Government Act](#) [41], where Obama teamed up with Republican Tom Coburn to pass legislation that put government spending programs on a searchable website for public access. No question that this is a good bill, but as proof of concept for a "reach out" strategy, it's weak (but, [apparently](#) [42], the best example available). For one thing, the bill is an obvious descendant of the work Gingrich (even a stopped clock) did with [Thomas](#) [43], which gave the public web access to legislation, so politically the bill was low-hanging fruit that could be sold in the classic Republican small government, anti-spending mode. No truly progressive policies will meet those conditions. More importantly, Obama's *Transparency* achievement, though real, is trivial--both in terms of policy outcomes and potential for conflict--seen relative to what's going to be needed to achieve universal health care (let alone clawing back income distribution to some sane, non-Gilded Age level). But wait, say the fans, you don't really understand; what Obama wants to do [at least [now](#) [44]] is bring "Republican and independent voters outside of Washington" into the fold, and that will give us the leverage we need for real change. And if this were true, I would have expected to see enough calls from these Republican and independent voters to prevent children from dying because Bush vetoed S-CHIP, to take but one example of many. Ditto FISA (See Appendix II). Didn't happen. Na ga happen.

Here's another idea:

*When you've got them by the balls, the heart and head soon follow.* How about we try real oversight and a return to the rule of law in the form of criminal investigations, indictments, and jail time, instead of singing kumbaya? Combine that with a strong institutional presence in the form of a party you can actually mobilize, and you might get the Conservative Movement back in line. With a Democratic president, there'll be no pardons for them. Some operatives should do time, *pour encourager les autres*. That's the kind of politics we need.

**Obama presents himself as unifying, but accountability is what's needed.** Let's repeat that "reach out" paragraph:

I've learned in my life that you can stand firm in your principles while still reaching out to those who might not always agree with you.

Fine words butter no parsnips. What principles are we talking about, here? Off the top of my head:

1. The *principle* that everyone is equal before the law.
2. The *principle* that this nation does not torture.
3. The *principle* that there are three co-equal branches of government.
4. The *principle* that high government officials should not break the law with impunity.
5. The *principle* that elections are not stolen
6. The *principle* that war is not made on fake evidence

[To give but a few examples of how the Conservative Movement violated each principle: 1 Republican Justice Department uses criminal justice system to prosecute Democrats before elections. 2 Abu Ghraib; European gulags <sup>[45]</sup>; Gitmo; destroyed CIA tapes. 3 Signing statements; Fourth Branch of government. 4 Scooter Libby. 5 Florida 2000 <sup>[46]</sup>; Ohio 2004 <sup>[47]</sup>. 6 Downing Street Memo <sup>[48]</sup> (full text <sup>[49]</sup>).]

Check that list, and start crossing off the Republicans whose actions show that they don't share those principles, and whose principles differ from all progressives, most Democrats, and most Americans, and by the time you're done, you'll have about as many Republicans as would fit in an elevator. A very small, dumbwaiter-sized elevator. In fact, when the elevator door opens, you might just end up "reaching out" to empty space.

This isn't just a matter of a "food fight," or "disagreements." These are not abstract agree-to-disagree issues. Violating these principles ought to entail criminal prosecution (destroyed CIA tapes, election theft), impeachment (signing statements), or whatever the remedy is for just plain evil (torture).

So at best, Obama is feeding us highflown, but vacuous rhetoric. At worst, he'll let the Conservative Movement operatives who drive the Bush administration get away clean, after committing criminal and impeachable offenses with impunity and no accountability of any kind. That's not the kind of politics we need to achieve a permanent progressive majority.

**Obama presents himself as a change agent, but weakens the forces that bring about change.** You can't win a mandate with a content-free platform, and conflict-free is content-free. And if there's no mandate for change, then there's no change.

So much of the advocacy for Obama highlights his attractive personality, his personal history, his rhetorical skills, and his negotiation skills. Atrios <sup>[50]</sup> says it best:

## Shorter Candidates

Obama: The system sucks, but I'm so awesome that it'll melt away before me.

Edwards: The system sucks, and we're gonna have to fight like hell to destroy it.

Clinton: The system sucks, and I know how to work within it more than anyone.

We don't need the kind of politics that's about a single, charismatic figure. We need a mandate for progressive change. But when Obama focuses on "the big table," and "negotiation," and "reaching out," and the whole kumbaya thing, he weakens what Keynes calls the "animal spirits" of the very activists and social entrepreneurs that we need to build progressive institutions, and get progressive policies into the Overton Window and then enacted.

Universal health care is *not* going to come because Obama sits the players down around the big table and they suddenly, magically,\*\*\*\* "see the light" because of his mad negotiation skillz as an honest broker; it's not in their interest to see what we see, and so they won't. Universal health care *may* happen because of heat; if enough people can put heat on the corporations, and on their elected representatives, to make it happen. Confrontation increases voter turnout [51], and that can only be good for our side. And confrontation is heat, not light. Obama has it exactly backward.

And here I have to say that this passage--

... there?s no shortage of anger and bluster ...

--grotesquely trivializes the experience of any aware citizen under Bush's rule. Is it wrong to be "angry" that the Bush administration has turned us into a nation of torturers? Is it wrong to be "angry" that the Republicans took us to war under false pretenses? Is it "bluster" to say that Cheney's claim to be the Fourth Branch of government is absurd? Is it "bluster" to demand our Fourth Amendment rights back?

And who might these angry blusterers be?

Surely not those "principled" Republicans, since Obama wants to "reach out" to them. Surely not Reid and Pelosi; they've been nice as nice, going off to the slaughter like lambs. Surely not Rahm Emmanuel or Chuck Schumer! And surely not Kristol, Broder, Brooks, or Sullivan!

Could the angry blusterers be .... Progressives? Harshing the mellow with their demands for accountability and the restoration of Constitutional government?

Do we really need the kind of politics that tells us to lay back and enjoy it?

**The country can't afford to wait for Obama to discover that his strategy of conciliation has failed.** Do the math. Reid and Pelosi tried "reaching out" in 2007. Nothing will happen in 2008. Assuming Obama takes office in 2009, it will take his conciliatory strategy a year to fail, which it

will, since he's doing the same thing Reid and Pelosi did while expecting a different result.

That brings us to 2010.

Can the country really hold out against a runaway Conservative Movement that long?

\* \* \*

In short, I think Krugman is right, and Obama is wrong. Krugman doesn't have a problem with Obama, but with Obama's strategy. Krugman writes <sup>[52]</sup>:

It's actually Mr. Obama who's being unrealistic here, believing that the insurance and drug industries — which are, in large part, the cause of our health care problems — will be willing to play a constructive role in health reform. The fact is that there's no way to reduce the gross wastefulness of our health system without also reducing the profits of the industries that generate the waste.

As a result, drug and insurance companies — backed by the conservative movement as a whole — will be implacably opposed to any significant reforms. And what would Mr. Obama do then? He'll get on television and say Harry and Louise are lying, he says. I'm sure the lobbyists are terrified.

As health care goes, so goes the rest of the progressive agenda. **Anyone who thinks that the next president can achieve real change without bitter confrontation is living in a fantasy world.**

Bingo.

Krugman doesn't have an Obama problem; Obama has a Krugman problem. Because Krugman is right.

TROLL PROPHYLACTIC As indicated by my sig, of course I'll vote for Obama in the general, and happily so. [UPDATE: This post is from December 2007, before Obama's primary campaign threw me, and those like me, under the bus, and convinced me that I had no place in the Democrat Party. The straw that broke my back was that Obama voted in favor of FISA [cough] reform, and hence against the rule of law and the Fourth Amendment.] That doesn't mean I won't stop pushing for the kind progressive politics I think the country needs. [UPDATE: "Progressive" is used here without irony; again, when the post was written, the casual smears and misogyny of the so-called "progressive" movement had not yet become evident.

NOTE \* All credit due to HRC for mainstreaming VRWC, and more importantly the very concept. It's a mystery <sup>[53]</sup> to me why she hasn't tried to leverage her understanding for strategic purposes, rather than for narrow tactical goals during the Lewinsky matter (see Appendix I).

NOTE \*\* Jonah Goldberg's latest emission, Liberal Fascism <sup>[54]</sup>, is but the latest, yet by no means the best, example of work in this *genre*.

NOTE \*\*\* Back in the day, the parties were a lot less "polarized" than they are today. Historically, the Democratic Party was a coalition, and racist Southern and very senior representatives played a strong part within it. Similarly, the Republican Party was also a coalition, with moderate Republicans, often from the Northeast (Margaret Chase Smith, who stood up to McCarthy) or the Midwest (Charles Percy). Because both parties were coalitions, shifting alliances between party factions ("bipartisanship [55]") was the order of the day. However, when LBJ got civil rights legislation passed, the Republicans under Nixon countered with the Southern Strategy, and peeled off the racists. Similarly, the political environment squeezed out many moderate Republicans, as they were attacked from the right by the Conservative Movement, and from the left by Democrats. The result was that both parties became much more like disciplined parties than fractious coalitions, and so the era where factions within the parties could be played off against each other -- which, operationally, is what bipartisanship [55] means and has always meant -- came to an end. Villagers like Broder or Russert would like to play "honest brokers" between the parties, but such honesty is not possible, because the Village is, institutionally, an almost wholly owned subsidiary of the Conservative Movement (with the exception of a few honorable individuals and some fresh progressive institutions). We must also notice and remember that when Broder and the Villagers wax nostalgic for the twin lost causes of Bipartisanship and Civility, they're privileging their own self-images as honest brokers and go-betweens over the cold reality that, pre-Southern Strategy, racism was at the institutional foundation of the Democratic Party of that day, so that's what they're nostalgic for. White columns, the ol' verandah, Rastus bearing a silver tray with the mint juleps or whatever the Fuck the village drank back then.

NOTE \*\*\*\* Conservative Andrew Sullivan's portrayal of Obama [18] as a post-Boomer, unifying figure is a crude attempt to erase this history. Bareback Andy is sound on torture, credit where credit is due, but there's no other word for his *Atlantic* piece (well, other than "prolix") than "obfuscatory."

\* \* \*

## **Appendix I: The Conservative Movement in the Clinton Years**

When Clinton, a Democrat, took office, the Conservative Movement, in the person of Richard Mellon Scaife, funded the Arkansas Project disinformation campaign against Clinton through The American Prospect [!!] Spectator; the Conservative Movement provided legal services through the Federalist Society elves who manipulated Paula Jones; the Conservative Movement replaced the Special Prosecutor who wasn't getting results with one of their own, Kenneth Winston Starr; the Conservative Movement leveraged its new-found control over the press to print story after story of scandal after scandal, none of which panned out (Timesman Jeff Gerth's Whitewater reporting was especially egregious, but WaPo's "Steno Sue" Schmidt, who printed leak after leak from Starr's office, gave him a run for his money); and the Conservative Movement, after immense labor, finally managed to metastatize the scandal from baseless accusations of financial impropriety ("Whitewater") and crazed theories about murder ("Vince Foster") into the once-famous (and so-called<sup>^</sup>) perjury trap with Monica Lewinsky, followed by the failed impeachment effort organized by Hastert, Gingrich, et al (most of whom -- strong "family values" men, one and all -- were guilty of adultery themselves).

The best way to view the Clinton era, then, is to see it as a slow-moving, media-fuelled coup, beginning with the winger-billionaire funded Arkansas Project, and culminating with the Conservative Movement's seizure of power through the theft of Florida 2000 and the famous "good for one time only" decision, Bush v. Gore.

Once again, the ROI that the winger billionaires got from the Conservative Movement's stellar work in staging the coup against Clinton were absolutely spectacular: Bush, once in office, immediately enacted massive tax cuts over a token and demoralized ("bipartisan") Democratic opposition, and the great bulk of the money went to the people who staged the coup. Surprise.

APPENDIX NOTE <sup>^</sup> Perjury has to be material. There was never a showing that Clinton's affair with Monica was relevant <sup>[56]</sup> to the Paula Jones case. Pure harassment, start to finish, and, in retrospect, a harbinger of the complete politicization of the criminal justice system and the courts under Bush. Interestingly, Clinton and Monica met when she, as a White House intern, brought him a pizza when he was working late in the White House *on the night the Republicans under Gingrich shut down the government*. Cute meet.

## Appendix II: The Constitution

I think it's excellent that Obama, by all accounts, was a fine Constitutional law professor at a great school. And it encourages me that Obama gave excellent answers to the Boston Globe questionnaire on executive power.

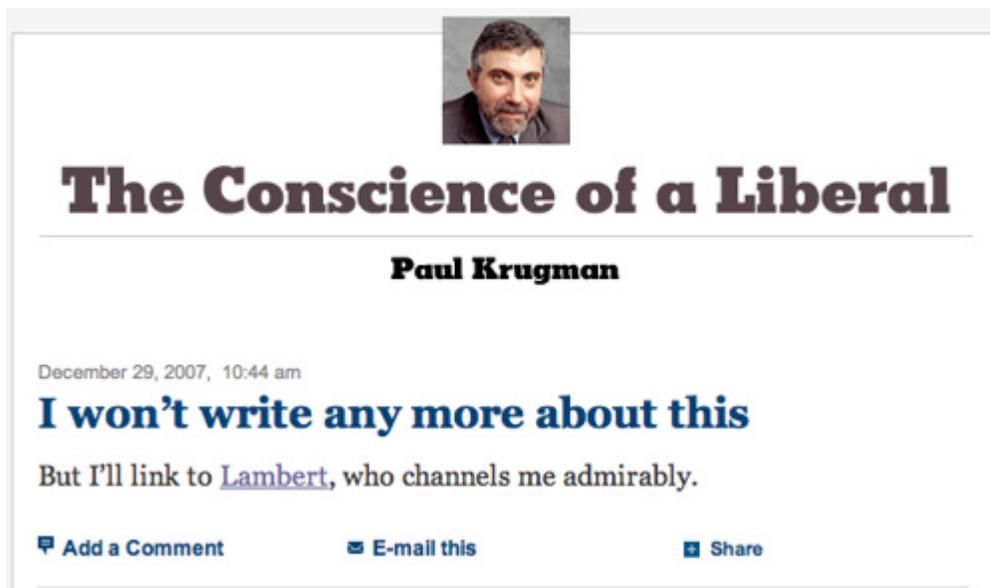
All of which explains why I was disappointed that Obama failed to show up on the Senate floor to defend the Fourth Amendment, and the Constitution, when Dodd successfully filibustered FISA and prevented, at least for a time, retroactive immunity for the telcos and bulk-order warrants. (Let's not say "basket warrants" anymore, mokay?) As Kos is fond of pointing out, one way to be a leader is to, er, lead, not offer token statements of support from a safe distance. Lead, as opposed to going meta, and making speeches, however excellent, *about* leadership.

UPDATE Big Tent Democrat <sup>[57]</sup> channels the shorter lambert:

I am on record that Obama's talk on change is pure nonsense. I am confident now that Mark Schmitt is right, that this is just a schtick. The problem is in politics, schticks matter and limit what you can do.

Bingo. Of course Obama's schtick limits him. That's why Brooks, Broder, Sullivan, and Kristol like it. They *want* progressives limited.

UPDATE What a holiday gift. My life is complete:



The screenshot shows a blog post header for Paul Krugman. At the top is a small portrait of Paul Krugman. Below it, the title "The Conscience of a Liberal" is displayed in a large, bold, black serif font. Underneath the title, the author's name "Paul Krugman" is written in a smaller, bold, black sans-serif font. A horizontal line separates the author's name from the post content. The date and time "December 29, 2007, 10:44 am" are shown in a small, grey font. The main headline of the post is "I won't write any more about this" in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font. Below this, a sub-headline reads "But I'll link to [Lambert](#), who channels me admirably." in a smaller, blue sans-serif font. At the bottom of the post, there are three interactive buttons: "Add a Comment" with a comment icon, "E-mail this" with an envelope icon, and "Share" with a social media icon. A small "[7]" is visible to the right of the post content.

In fact:

UPDATE The post's title is a riff on a [famous paper](#) [58] in computer science.

UPDATE Apparently, "[once in a generation means "just once"](#) [59]. Odd.

UPDATE For anybody who imagines that this is a hit piece, or that I'm unpersuadable, [see here](#) [60].



No votes yet

---

**Source URL (modified on 10/04/2011 - 9:32pm):**

[http://www.correntewire.com/obama\\_stump\\_speech\\_strategy\\_of\\_conciliation\\_considered\\_harmful?page=0](http://www.correntewire.com/obama_stump_speech_strategy_of_conciliation_considered_harmful?page=0)

#### Links

[1] [http://www.correntewire.com/departments/departments\\_of\\_how\\_stupid\\_do\\_they\\_think\\_we\\_are\\_](http://www.correntewire.com/departments/departments_of_how_stupid_do_they_think_we_are_)

[2] [http://www.correntewire.com/thread/dem\\_on\\_dem\\_violence](http://www.correntewire.com/thread/dem_on_dem_violence)

[3] [http://www.correntewire.com/tags/barack\\_obama](http://www.correntewire.com/tags/barack_obama)

[4] <http://www.correntewire.com/tags/progressives>

[5] <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2007/12/28/205631/80/760/427407>

[6] [http://atrios.blogspot.com/2007\\_12\\_23\\_archive.html#6565826116923626004](http://atrios.blogspot.com/2007_12_23_archive.html#6565826116923626004)

[7] <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/12/29/i-wont-write-any-more-about-this/>

[8] <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com/2007/12/bipartisan-zombies-by-digby-it-was.html>

[9] <http://www.andrewtobias.com/>

[10] <http://www.sadlyno.com/archives/8396.html>

[11] <http://sideshow.me.uk/>

[12] <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/10/30/obama-and-social-security/>

[13] <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2007/12/22/84232/156>

[14] <http://www.slate.com/id/2280/>

[15] [http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2007/12/21/right\\_and\\_obama/index\\_np.html](http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2007/12/21/right_and_obama/index_np.html)

[16] <http://www.startribune.com/opinion/commentary/12673107.html>

[17] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/21/AR2007122101923.html>

[18] <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200712/obama>

[19] [http://www.wfcourier.com/articles/2007/12/28/news/top\\_story/doc4775211182ecc379814340.txt](http://www.wfcourier.com/articles/2007/12/28/news/top_story/doc4775211182ecc379814340.txt)

[20] <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/30/us/politics/30vote.html>

[21] <http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?articleId=9606>

[22] [http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Conservative\\_foundations](http://www.sourcewatch.org/index.php?title=Conservative_foundations)

[23] <http://www.mediatransparency.org/funders.php>

[24] <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19950701fareviewessay5058/john-b-judis/trotskyism-to-anachronism-the-neoconservative-revolution.html>

[25] <http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2005/05/b711509.html>

[26] [http://atrios.blogspot.com/2006\\_10\\_01\\_archive.html#115982494469068054](http://atrios.blogspot.com/2006_10_01_archive.html#115982494469068054)

[27] [http://matthewyglesias.theatlantic.com/archives/2007/12/all\\_s\\_well.php](http://matthewyglesias.theatlantic.com/archives/2007/12/all_s_well.php)

[28] <http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0307.confessore.html>

[29] <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/01/27/hillary.today/>

[30] [http://correntewire.com/emergent\\_properties\\_and\\_criminal\\_conspiracies](http://correntewire.com/emergent_properties_and_criminal_conspiracies)

[31] <http://mediamatters.org/items/200703290002>

[32] [http://www.correntewire.com/the\\_overton\\_window\\_illustrated](http://www.correntewire.com/the_overton_window_illustrated)

[33] <http://www.reuters.com/article/ousiv/idUSN1442383020071114>

[34] [http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/archives/individual/2007\\_12/012733.php](http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/archives/individual/2007_12/012733.php)

[35] [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ka3Pb\\_StJn4&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ka3Pb_StJn4&feature=related)

[36] [http://www.correntewire.com/late\\_night\\_krugman](http://www.correntewire.com/late_night_krugman)

[37] <http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/cartoonamerica/cartoon-punch.html>

[38] [http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2007/12/sweet\\_obama\\_says\\_no\\_i\\_i\\_i\\_i.html](http://blogs.suntimes.com/sweet/2007/12/sweet_obama_says_no_i_i_i_i.html)

[39] <http://thepage.time.com/obamas-new-stump-speech/>

[40] <http://digbysblog.blogspot.com/2007/11/hide-bunnies-by-digby-radar-online.html>

[41] [http://obama.senate.gov/podcast/060914-091406\\_coburn-o/](http://obama.senate.gov/podcast/060914-091406_coburn-o/)

[42] [http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2007/12/29/obama\\_europe/](http://www.salon.com/opinion/conason/2007/12/29/obama_europe/)

[43] <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

[44]

[http://www.correntewire.com/obama\\_stump\\_speech\\_strategy\\_of\\_conciliation\\_considered\\_harmful#comment-68171](http://www.correntewire.com/obama_stump_speech_strategy_of_conciliation_considered_harmful#comment-68171)

[45] [http://www.correntewire.com/the\\_arithmetic\\_were\\_thousands\\_from\\_bushs\\_gulags\\_disappeared](http://www.correntewire.com/the_arithmetic_were_thousands_from_bushs_gulags_disappeared)

[46] <http://www.rinr.fsu.edu/winter2005/features/battlefield.html>

[47] [http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/10432334/was\\_the\\_2004\\_election\\_stolen](http://www.rollingstone.com/news/story/10432334/was_the_2004_election_stolen)

[48] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2005/06/14/DI2005061401261.html>

[49] <http://www.afterdowningstreet.org/?q=node/1>

[50] [http://atrios.blogspot.com/2007\\_12\\_16\\_archive.html#2065480794031988135](http://atrios.blogspot.com/2007_12_16_archive.html#2065480794031988135)

[51] <http://www.dailykos.com/storyonly/2007/12/27/95010/179/336/426798>

[52] <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/17/opinion/17krugman.html>

[53]

[http://www.correntewire.com/hillary\\_in\\_white\\_house\\_prayer\\_group\\_with\\_republican\\_fixer\\_james\\_baker\\_and\\_ken\\_starr](http://www.correntewire.com/hillary_in_white_house_prayer_group_with_republican_fixer_james_baker_and_ken_starr)

[54] <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=fuckwad>

[55] [http://www.correntewire.com/the\\_sorry\\_news\\_sorry\\_about\\_bipartisanship](http://www.correntewire.com/the_sorry_news_sorry_about_bipartisanship)

[56] <http://www.cnn.com/ALLPOLITICS/1998/04/03/jones.opinion/>

[57] <http://www.talkleft.com/story/2007/12/28/92839/956>

[58] <http://www.hacker-dictionary.com/terms/considered-harmful>

[59] [http://weblogs.baltimoresun.com/news/politics/blog/2007/12/michelle\\_obama\\_its\\_now\\_or\\_neve.html](http://weblogs.baltimoresun.com/news/politics/blog/2007/12/michelle_obama_its_now_or_neve.html)

[60] [http://www.correntewire.com/two\\_simple\\_litmus\\_tests\\_for\\_obama](http://www.correntewire.com/two_simple_litmus_tests_for_obama)