

Obama the Flim-Flam Man

After suffering through two self-absorbed books by Barack Obama, who apparently believed the world was desperate to hear his life story even though he had not yet accomplished anything significant, I realized I had already seen the movie. “The Music Man” was released less than a year after Obama was born, but it nevertheless skillfully portrayed the essential skills of the Chicago “community organizer,” Illinois State Senator, and supposed soon-to-be savior of the world.

For those Generation X people who may never have seen “The Music Man,” it was one of the greatest musicals ever to have been presented on Broadway. It was then made into an outstanding motion picture (1962), which many would rank as even greater than the play. The story revolves around a traveling salesman, Professor Harold Hill, who was neither a professor nor the legitimate owner of the name painted on his suitcase. Hill was the ultimate flim-flam man, a con artist who managed to stay one step ahead of the law as he traveled from small town to small town at the turn of the last century, selling band instruments he had no intention of ever delivering.

Of course, the towns Hill briefly visited didn’t necessarily have any particular need or desire for band instruments, so the phony professor spread stories about a new pool hall and how its presence would lead to the degradation of all the town’s youths. The “big scene” in the film is Harold Hill’s persuasive warning to a large Iowa crowd gathered at the town square that “You’ve got trouble, right here in River City.” The trouble starts with “T” and rhymes with “P” which stands for “pool.” Hill was brilliantly portrayed by Robert Preston (both on Broadway and in the movie), and even though the audience knows he is a charlatan, it comes to grow fond of him. But the town ultimately learns what Hill is - a con man duping its residents out of the money they thought would bring them band instruments to keep their children away from the corruption of the pool hall. Hill is apprehended, handcuffed and nearly taken away to jail. But Hollywood likes a happy ending, and at the last moment some battered band instruments and faded uniforms arrive. Hill’s change of heart is due to his growing love for the town’s attractive music teacher and librarian, Marion Paroo (Shirley Jones), who is as good a singer as Hill is a con artist.

Travel ahead in time about a hundred years, to the 2008 campaign for the Presidency. Professor Harold Hill has been replaced by Senator Barack Obama, a man equally skilled in talking up a crowd and making empty promises, and with every intention of taking their money without delivering the goods. Where Hill warns the crowd that it is “not aware of the caliber of disaster indicated by the presence of a pool table,” Obama warns of rising ocean levels and species becoming extinct. Where Hill paints a picture of the town’s youths “fritterin’ away their noon-time, supper-time, chore-time” playing pool, Obama paints a picture of everyone losing their homes because their nasty capitalist bosses will pay them slave wages if the Republicans retain the White House. Where Hill talks of the shame of the young boys re-buckling their “knickerbockers below the knee,” Obama talks of the shame of 47 million people dying in the streets because they lack health insurance.

Hill uses fear to talk the River City citizens into buying band instruments from him. Obama uses fear to talk American citizens into voting from him. Just as Hill exaggerates the impact of a pool hall, Obama distorts the American economy as “the worst since the Great Depression” - even though the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew at a 3.3 per cent pace in the second quarter of 2008 (far better than the 1.9 per cent rate in the last quarter of Bill Clinton's Presidency).

Obama cannot beat John McCain on the issue of America's defense, and he knows it. McCain stood up to Democrats and his fellow Republicans in arguing for “the surge” in Iraq, and he was proven right. Obama not only argued against the surge, he voted against funding for the troops already there. Obama was willing to lose the war in furtherance of his political career. Playing with the “big boys” of the U.S. Senate, Obama could not simply vote “present” as he had done so many times in the Illinois State Senate. He had to put up or shut up, and bet that the surge would not work. McCain acted on the basis of principle and experience; Obama voted as though he was playing poker – and lost.

Seeing that simply being opposed to the Iraq War was not enough to win the nomination or the election, Obama had to resort to the usual Democrat strategy: paint the United States as a terrible place with a failing economy, pump up the fears of the middle class by making them think they are all one paycheck away from a bread line, distort official economic figures to paint the worst possible picture, and portray normal events of a dynamic economy (such as routine job dislocations) as though they were new and unique and the fault of the current occupant of the White House.

And just as Harold Hill had a bumbling apprentice helping with his scheme (Marcellus Washburn, played by Buddy Hackett), Obama has a willing media doing his bidding for him, by constantly running news segments that emphasize bad news while totally ignoring good news (e.g., the aforementioned 3.3 per cent growth in GDP).

Convincing Americans that the nation is full of people without health insurance is easier if you include in your numbers 20-25 million illegal immigrants, and neglect to mention that a hefty percentage of the uninsured are young, unmarried people who can afford to buy health insurance but choose not to (25 year olds believe they are unlikely to need it and, for the most part, they are correct), and another large percentage of the uninsured are the “temporarily uninsured” (they are simply between jobs). Everyone has seen news stories about Americans without insurance. Where have the stories been about how much less expensive insurance can be if you are willing to accept a high deductible?

The big economic stories of 2008 involve the rising price of oil, and the high number of home foreclosures. Obama and the media have been quick to blame President Bush for the rising oil prices, but when it dropped from \$140 per barrel to under \$100 per barrel, no one gave that same man credit. Rather than recognize that the price of oil fluctuates on the world market because of market forces and the increasing demands of China and India, Obama and the media simply blame Republicans – while Democrats in Congress continue to refuse to allow drilling for more oil in the United States, and place incredible

roadblocks in the path of additional nuclear power plants. Obama and the media are quick to tell stories of people who could not keep up with their mortgage payments, but don't point out the people who bought homes they knew they couldn't afford but thought they could pass them on quickly and make a profit from the next greedy "investor."

The plain fact is that Americans are wealthier than they have ever been. Home ownership is at an all-time high, despite significant problems with "below prime" mortgages. Most Americans who want jobs have jobs, and the unemployment rate under president Bush has been lower than the average of the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, and even the 1990s. Americans in some industries have certainly suffered over the last few years, but other businesses have done much better than expected. (American exports are booming, for example.) The United States remains the envy of the world; European Socialist nations would love to have the growth rate America enjoys. The basic underpinnings of the American economy are strong; the economy is clearly not "worse than any time since the Great Depression – despite what Obama and the media continue to repeat.

Make people believe disaster is just around the corner and that only you offer the "hope" and the "change" needed to avert it, and they will buy your band instruments or vote for you. Repeat a lie often enough and many people will believe you. And with accomplices in the media unwilling to challenge lies and distortions, even more will believe.

Harold Hill was able to continue his flim-flam scheme from town to town because his past remained hidden from his customers. Obama has risen to the level of Presidential nominee of the Democrat Party because his past has been kept hidden. Had his associations with Reverend Jeremiah "God damn America" Wright been made public earlier in the campaign, Hillary Clinton would have been the Democrat nominee.

Professor Harold Hill was a man of no accomplishment, with skills limited to glib talk and the ability to convince people that there was trouble right around the corner. Barack Obama is merely the living embodiment of the fictional Harold Hill. The very junior Senator from Illinois is a man with no significant accomplishments beyond mastering the art of self-promotion, and having the ability to smooth-talk his way past far more qualified Presidential primary contenders by frightening the voters with lies and then promising to save them from those lies.

"The Music Man" ended with Harold Hill "delivering the goods" - but Hill's happy ending was guaranteed by a script. Obama has no such script, nor will he be able to come up with all the band instruments and uniforms he has promised the electorate... but that doesn't stop him from traveling from town to town, collecting money from the gullible voters of America. And if he cons his way into the White House, he'll have the help of the Internal Revenue Service to take hundreds of billions more.

Don Fredrick
September 4, 2008

Copyright 2008 Don Fredrick

