

What Bill Clinton Really Said

Yes, Bill Clinton's rousing convention speech motivated many of the people in Obama's political base. But that is preaching to the choir. The base would vote for Obama even if intimate photos of him with Reggie Love and Kal Penn were released.

What Clinton *also* did was say things that work *against* Obama. Clinton, who most certainly detests Obama for the thuggish actions in the 2008 primaries and caucuses that cost Hillary—and him—eight more years in the White House, was brilliant. He made sure he repeated every major criticism of Obama the Republicans have made. "The Republicans left Obama a mess and now they say he didn't clean it up fast enough!" Yes, that is a slam of his friend George W. Bush. But Bush is not on the ballot, and the statement is also an indictment of Obama. It reminds viewers—like Reagan Democrats—that Obama has failed.

Did viewers hear, "Bush failed" or did they hear, "Obama failed" when Clinton spoke? On CNN, Wolf Blitzer and his assemblage of Obama toadies clearly heard, "Bush failed." But "Obama didn't clean it up fast enough!" is what many Americans may *remember*.

Clinton adds that the Republicans "...did it well. They looked good, they sounded good, they convinced me... that they all love their families, their children, were grateful they'd been born in America, and... really, I'm not being—they did. And, this is important, they convinced me they were honorable people who believed what they said and they're gonna keep every commitment they'd made. We just gotta make sure the American people know what those commitments are." Clinton did not claim that the Republican commitments were wrong or unreasonable. He told the "Reagan Democrats" that they can trust Mitt Romney and Paul Ryan, that they are not evil people, that they are not racists, and that the election is simply about issues and competence. Clinton's message was essentially, "It's okay to vote against Obama, and that does not make you a racist." (Whether Clinton's "born in America" was a subtle reference to Obama's origins will never be known.)

Clinton spent a substantial amount of time noting how well he worked with Republicans in Congress and with both George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush. He made it clear that they are all decent people with whom he had honest policy differences. But he said he didn't let those differences get in the way of accomplishing things for the American people. This was not a brief passage in his speech; it was a point that was emphasized. Clinton then noted Obama's inability to deal with a Republican Congress. Yes, Clinton "officially" put the blame on the GOP. But is there any doubt that he intentionally made a clear contrast between his own people skills and Obama's? The subtle messages in Clinton's words were, "Obama failed where I succeeded" and "Those Republicans aren't so bad after all." Again, CNN's talking heads may not have heard those messages—but many Americans did.

Yes, Clinton briefly ridiculed Paul Ryan's budget for relying on the same \$716 billion in Medicare budget cuts that Obama used to help offset the cost of ObamaCare. But Clinton first confirmed—in much greater detail and using far more time—that Obama did, in fact, cut \$716 billion from Medicare. Clinton therefore made it *impossible* for Obama or any other Democrats to now claim that Medicare funds are not being used to fund ObamaCare. (Imagine DNC head Debbie Wasserman Schultz on the Sunday talk shows saying, “No, that’s not true”—and being immediately confronted with, “But even Bill Clinton said...” Will the viewers believe Bill Clinton or Debbie Wasserman Schultz?)

Toward the end of his address Clinton noted several issues and said, “If you believe X, then vote for Obama.” Even that section was craftily worded by Clinton. To illustrate the point with an extreme example, had Clinton said, “If you believe welfare spending should be doubled in order to help the poor people of this nation, then vote for Obama!” the convention crowd would most certainly have shouted its approval. But millions of people watching on television do not believe that welfare spending should be doubled. To them, the message is, “Don’t vote for Obama!” Thus, when Clinton told the assembled delegates they should vote for Obama if they believe in welcoming immigrants to the United States so they can make better lives for themselves, he was essentially *also* saying, “If you think loose immigration policies are *not* good for the nation then you should *not* vote for Obama.”

Clinton's speech was generously peppered with messages that sound pro-Obama on the surface but actually say something much different. If the Romney team and Karl Rove have any sense, they will spend a week creating a series of Obama attack ads that feature the mountain of statements cleverly handed to them by Bill Clinton. If “He didn’t clean it up fast enough” does not appear in a political ad, I’ll eat my elephant-adorned convention hat.

By the end of the speech, the “progressives” at CNN and MSNBC were slapping each other on the back and joking about how much Clinton had helped Obama’s reelection efforts. They made the grave mistake of taking Clinton’s words at face value, forgetting that he is as crafty as a fox.

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