



ARNOLD AND DONNA
Sunday, July 13, 2008

Every Sunday CUIP's president Jacqueline Salit and strategist and philosopher Fred Newman watch the political talk shows and discuss them. Here are excerpts from their dialogue on Sunday, July 13, 2008 after watching "The Chris Matthews Show" and "This Week with George Stephanopoulos."

Salit: There were two people on the talk shows this morning that I liked. One was Arnold Schwarzenegger, the other was Donna Brazile. I'm a fan of hers. Here's what struck me in the interview Stephanopoulos did with Schwarzenegger. Arnold comes across as who he is, namely somebody who came to politics from a career and a life filled with a range of accomplishments in other areas. One of the things that's appealing about him is that when he talks about public policy and politics, it has that "with a grain of salt" quality to it that people who've had to make their way in the "real" world not the political world have, which I appreciate.

Here's a political point of interest. He was the only one on the shows we watched who spoke specifically about independent voters. He talked about the size of the independent voting bloc in California, it's 20%. He's a McCain supporter and he argued that what McCain has to do is "cross the line" from traditional Republican to more traditional Democratic issues. And, part of what he's getting at here, although he doesn't quite say this, is that if you want to appeal to independents, you have to find a way to get outside the ideological box.

Newman: Schwarzenegger does have a kind of authenticity and likeability that is based on his having established himself in a lot of different ways before becoming a politician. That's always there and he can call on that. In some ways, he's the perfect match, as a non-candidate for the presidency, to both Obama and McCain. He fits in well with those two because they're both kind of sincerity guys. In some ways, the campaign is about "who's more sincere?" and Arnold is a sincerity guy, too. He projects *I care about transforming the state. I don't care about politics*. In some ways, that's the dominant message of this presidential year. So I think he's a player who fits in with both McCain and Obama.

Salit: That's interesting.

Newman: When Stephanopoulos says, 'Well, you seem to agree with Obama on these different things, but you're supporting McCain,' Arnold's able to smile and say, 'Oh, yes. That's what this whole year is about.' He's a good spokesperson for McCain. My guess is that they're going to use him as much as they possibly can, if they can ever get those fires in California to go out.

Salit: *The Chris Matthews Show* focused on the electoral map. They have a list of the states that have been "red" states that the Obama campaign may be in a

position to grab: Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, maybe Georgia. Is there anything of interest in this discussion?

Newman: I guess what's interesting is the underlying question as to whether Obama can "turn it on" again and do in the general election what he did in the primaries. Because that's all he's got to do to win. The general election season is going to be very short – just a little over two months. Reaching all the way back to what he did in Iowa – can he inspire these younger people to vote? Are they going to come out in big numbers? I think that's a fascinating question. I don't know the answer. I'm sure they're trying to develop a strategy for it.

Salit: No doubt that's what they have in mind when they decided to put Obama's acceptance speech at the 70,000 person stadium in Denver.

Newman: To state the obvious, the central thing is the generational issue. I've begun seeing some bumper stickers that the Dems are putting out which say "Twice is Enough." That obviously references Bush. But it also references the age question indirectly.

Salit: Time for something new and younger.

Newman: That's a really big feature of the campaign.

Salit: Something else that I liked about Schwarzenegger was his commentary on flip-flopping. He said he was pro-flip-flop. Part of the story here is that more traditional progressives are saying that Obama's flip-flopping on the issues is going to undermine his base. They're really talking more about themselves than they are talking about Obama, it seems to me, meaning that Obama's changes undermine their position. In any event, Schwarzenegger says, 'I love flip-flopping. Flip-flopping is a good thing. You're allowed to change your mind.' It was a welcome change from the usual.

Newman: The last thing the Democratic Party gets upset about is its left wing being upset about flip-flopping. The Democratic Party left has never displayed that it has the courage to vote for what it says it stands for anyhow. They're strategic flip-flopers, so to speak.

Salit: There was discussion about surrogates today. As you said, Arnold Schwarzenegger is a good surrogate for McCain, and also for the changing values in American politics. There was some discussion about the "bad" surrogates...Jesse Jackson and Phil Gramm.

Newman: I guess Obama's kids don't count as surrogates, even though they appeared on *Entertainment Tonight*.

Salit: No, I don't think so. But back to the "bad" surrogates. You get the Jesse Jackson story in microcosm in the exchange between George Will and Donna Brazile. George Will says: 'This Jackson thing really works for Obama because it shows that his candidacy is closing the parentheses on the Jesse Jackson/Al Sharpton school of racial politics. And,' he says, 'there's a million plus votes out there from Americans who want to do that, who will vote for Obama on that basis.' Donna Brazile disagrees and says 'I'm going to speak on behalf of Rev. Jackson, in defense of Rev. Jackson. I know Rev. Jackson. I respect him. He deserves that respect. Here's what he was trying to say...if you're going to hold a community accountable for its behavior, if you're going to hold black men accountable for their behavior, that's fine. But you also have to hold the government accountable for what its responsibility is in creating the circumstances that allow people to live decent lives.' A traditional left statement and a good one.

Newman: Obama's going to get a gigantic black vote, probably the biggest in history, for obvious reasons. I like Donna Brazile also. I'm sort of a fan of hers. And she's very sly. She's sly like a fox. So I think she put out just the right posture for the Jackson thing. Ultimately, the message is going to be: *We might curse, we might have jealousies and rivalries and whatever, but this is the year we know it's time for everybody to come together and vote for Barack Obama. Nobody's bigger than that.* That doesn't mean that nobody's bigger than Obama. It means nobody is bigger than voting for the first black president. And so they will. And it will be a big factor in the outcome, not only relative to the size of the black vote itself, but to the size of the youth vote, because for this generation below 40 or 45, black means progressive.

Salit: And voting for Obama is how you vote progressive. The discussion about Phil Gramm's remarks was next up in the surrogate story. I guess you could say this discussion was a "surrogate" for a discussion about what's happening to the American economy. Gramm, a McCain supporter, denies that there's anything "really wrong." People are just "whining." McCain repudiates Gramm's remarks. And the chorus goes up: *There is something really wrong. Just ask any American who has to buy gas or buy food or is holding a mortgage on a home.*

Newman: The answer to the question about whether there is something wrong with the economy is Yes and No. Yes, Americans are being affected by this cycle and/or stage of the economy. Does that mean that the economy is in anything more than a stage? No. That's how the economy works.

Salit: I was thinking about Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae and the role of the SEC and the Federal Reserve in all of this. Some people have raised that the problem is less about the impact of these particular episodes on the economy as a whole than it is about the credibility of certain institutions, like some of the ones I just named, to manage the economy through these kinds of crises.

Newman: Do the American people have a choice? Are there other institutions that they can go to? These are the institutions.

Salit: True enough.

Newman: No one asks people what they think of these institutions when the economy is going well. "Oh, I love that Treasury Department." Did you ever hear anyone say those specific words?

Salit: No, I can't say that I have. Thanks, Fred.