



COUNCIL FOR NATIONAL POLICY

Remarks
Mr. Fred Barnes
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I am delighted to be here. I'm not sure whether it is better to speak before dinner when people are waiting to eat and are eager for you to wrap up, or after dinner when they are eager for you to stop so they can leave and go to bed. We will see. You know before I speak, as Groucho Marx once said, "I have something very important to say." I think I will tell you my favorite Washington story, which was told to me some years ago by the late Henry Hyde. Do you remember Henry Hyde? I'm sure many of you do, but maybe not all of you. He was a tall, pro-life Congressman from the Chicago Suburbs who was in Washington for many years. He was a great man, and he really was the spokesman in the House of Representatives and really for all of Congress and Washington on behalf of unborn children. The first time was in 1993, and it was the first time I had spoken at a pro-life event, the National Right to Life Convention in Milwaukee. When I went there I just assumed Henry Hyde would be there. I was amazed that he wasn't. I thought "here is a right to life convention, Henry Hyde is bound to be one of the speakers," but he wasn't there. As luck would have it, when I was flying back from Milwaukee, we changed planes in Chicago. I had one of my daughters with me and there was Henry Hyde, sitting across the aisle. What a great coincidence. He was doing some work, and he said he would love to sit down and chat with us for a few minutes, but let's wait until we get back to Reagan National Airport. We got there and went into a coffee shop and Henry Hyde told me this story. It was about one of his debates; moreover, about the person he debated the most on the floor of the House on the subject of abortion. And that person happened to be another republican, a liberal republican Congressman from New Jersey named Millicent Fenwick. Some of you may remember her; she smoked a pipe among other things. She was extremely pro-abortion. And they debated many times on the House floor. Finally after one particularly heated debate, Congressman Hyde said that Millicent Fenwick came over to where he was sitting after the debate on the House floor and said, "Henry, you have to stop saying all these things. It is just terrible. You are hurting the Republican Party. You are dividing us. You just can't continue to say all those things when you are arguing with me." Congressman Hyde said, "Well Millicent, I'm going to tell you why I have to speak out for the unborn. I haven't told this to anybody in Washington. I never told this story to any of our colleagues, democrats or republicans. But I have to speak out, because I was a foundling. My mother was not married when she became pregnant and when I was born. And when I was 30 days old she took me to a couple's house. She knew they had a great family and that they would rear me in the right way. She left me at their doorstep when I was 30 days old, and they took me in and they raised me. And for that reason, because she didn't have an abortion, that is why I'm alive now and why I have to speak out." Congressman Hyde said Millicent Fenwick was thunderstruck. She didn't say a word. Her eyes got big, she walked away and sat down on another part of the House floor, and she never debated abortion with Henry Hyde ever again. Then Congressman Hyde looked at me and then at my daughter and said, "Of course the story wasn't true." He said he just made it up

on the spur of the moment. He said it certainly worked and it was for a good cause. I tell you, in Washington, I miss people like Henry Hyde. He was a really great man.

The other day I was reading. I had taken it upon myself to read everything that Ronald Reagan wrote. Things that he had actually written, not by a speech writer or some other person, and there was an awful lot of it. There were radio broadcasts that written in his long hand and so on. I ran into something in his second autobiography, *Where Is the Rest of Me*, published in 1965 and then *American Life*, published in 1990 after his time in The White House. And there was something in it that I was surprised to see. It was a story that the President said he had told more than any other story, and he told it so many times that it ought to be buried somewhere. Well, I'm sure Ed Meese knows this story, but I had never heard it before. I had never read about it and I've heard many, many speeches by President Reagan, had lunch with him at The White House, interviewed him, and so on. I had never heard this story. And it is a story involving the Christians being persecuted in Rome around the 1st century. A group of Christians were taken to the Coliseum, thrown out with the door slammed behind them, and then lions were let loose into the Coliseum. The lions and the crowds were roaring. The Coliseum was filled and the crowd wanted to see blood, gore, mayhem. The lions began moving in on the Christians, and just as they were getting very close, a man stepped out from among the Christians and said something to the lions, and they all lay down. And the crowd went wild. They didn't like it, they went berserk complaining about it, screaming and yelling that they wanted to see something other than the lions lying down. Finally a Roman official came down and signaled to the man who had spoken to the lions to come over. He asked the man, "What did you say to the lions to make them lie down like that?" The man answered "well, it was very simple: I told them after you eat, there will be speeches." Now that is a joke that only Ronald Reagan could have told.

I'm going to talk very quickly about two things and then take any questions or retorts. The first thing is that Washington isn't dysfunctional. Washington isn't broken. Quite the contrary, and I'll explain why. Secondly, I'll talk about why Obama is so much in decline and collapse right now in his presidency, and why it's aside from the scandals that beset him now and makes his position even worse than that of his administration.

You know back in the 50s and 60s political scientists, most of them liberals, were highly critical of Congress and there was a famous book called *The Deadlock of Democracy* by a political scientist named James McGregor Burns. He and other political scientists complained that Congress was a mess. The voters didn't know what they were voting for. There were all these conservative democrats, and there were some liberal republicans. There was an overlap and the lines just weren't clear. His real complaint of course was that the liberal agenda could not be passed. But he regarded this as a deadlock of democracy. It was a theory that was embraced by much of the liberal political science community. James McGregor Burns and others said that to have two parties, we need to have a liberal party and a conservative party, and we need to have our lines drawn where it is clear and the voters would know who to vote for. Well, we have

achieved that now. We have a liberal party and a conservative party. When this happens - not in the first two years of Obama's Presidency, but in the second two years - all of a sudden Washington is dysfunctional. It is broken. And why do Liberals say that? Because Obama's liberal agenda can't get through. That is why it is dysfunctional. Remember the first two years of the Obama presidency? When he passed Obamacare, Dodd-Frank, that stimulus bill and all of those things, Washington wasn't dysfunctional then. It wasn't broken then. It only became broken when the liberal agenda could not be passed. I'm amazed when I hear Republicans and conservatives talk about Washington being dysfunctional rather than divided. Washington is very much divided. Republicans and Democrats can't agree on taxes or spending, abortion, guns, economic growth, and so many things I could run down the list. Obama is in favor of tax reform. He wants to use it so he can raise taxes, which isn't a traditional tax reform for sure, but on every issue there is a great divide, and Obama cannot get his way. Well normally when this happens in our system the person who comes in and forges a compromise is the President of the United States. Obama has been unsuccessful in doing that. Now why has he been so unsuccessful? A friend of mine, Bob Merry, who used to be with the *Wall Street Journal* and now is the Editor of a magazine called *The National Interest*, a foreign policy magazine, wrote the other day about Washington and said it is a deadlock born of the President's resolve to push an agenda which has no clear national consensus. What Bob was trying to say there was that Obama is too far to the left. He can't forge a compromise, because he is so far to the left that he can't yield on enough things to allow Republicans to agree. It is the President who would have to break the deadlock, and he can't do it because he is a man of the left. What he wants in his second term are things for which the public will not force a Republican House of Representatives to pass. So the way to think about Washington is that it is divided.

Okay here is the second thing. Obama is in decline, and the decline began before the scandals broke. As I suggested earlier, the scandals only created more trouble for Obama, but his administration and his presidency had already come pretty close to collapse. Now Republicans don't get any credit for this, because they have been really passive since the election. I think they have read too many stories about how they are viewed so unfavorably by most Americans. The only person who has done much of anything is Congressman Darrell Issa with the hearings on Benghazi. He deserves a lot of credit.

So, what has caused this to happen in Obama's case? First of all, he has no agenda. You read these stories in the paper and magazines and so on - not in *The Weekly Standard* - and they talk about "poor Obama," he has these scandals and he can't get back to his agenda. My reaction is "what agenda?" I mean what specific agenda does he have? He didn't have one in the campaign, and the most he did was put out a glossy 10 or 12 page thing with some themes, but no real agenda. His agenda was demonizing Mitt Romney, which worked pretty well, in getting out his vote. But he didn't have an agenda. What are the issues now that he is focused on? He is focused on two issues from 2009: immigration reform, which he promised to do in his first year, and gun control. Then there's an issue from his campaign in 2008, yet he didn't mention it in 2012, which is closing Guantanamo. He has brought that back, and the chances of getting

anywhere on it are not very good. So he tried out a couple of new issues which you all have probably forgotten about already. In his State of the Union address, he talked about a \$9 minimum wage and universal pre-kindergarten around the country, ideas that are all but forgotten already. Obama has practically no influence on Capitol Hill now. Really, we saw it on gun control when he tried to throw his weight around and found out he had practically none. On immigration, the Democrats and particularly those like Chuck Schumer on the gang of eight who were in favor of the immigration reform bill that Marco Rubio promoted, worried about the President's negative influence. The more he tinkers, or tries to tinker with the immigration reform bill, the less chance it has of passing. So if you are against that bill, then you want to encourage Obama to get more involved. Obama's first team is gone. You may not like David Axelrod and David Plouffe and Rahm Emanuel, but they were pretty effective, smart people. They put together Obama's campaign and ran the White House pretty well. The second staff we have now are really not very good. Obama's speeches are flat. One of the great myths in Washington, and you still hear it all the time, is that Barack Obama is eloquent. Barack Obama is one of the most boring speakers who have ever been president. He was eloquent in his 2008 campaign, because he could talk about how he would bring Washington and the country together, and so on. It sounded great, but now that he has a record, now that he has issues that he has to deal with, he is boring. Remember when they were pushing for Obamacare to pass? It did pass, but not because of his speeches. The more he spoke around the country, the less popular it got. Of course, now it is more unpopular than ever. That is another reason why Obama is having a tough time, the implementation of Obamacare, which at the very least is going to be a train wreck, maybe worse. If Obama has an agenda, then why has the White House let the nation know that what he is really interested in this year is having Democrats retake the House of Representatives in 2014 so that Nancy Pelosi can be speaker again? Obama has even said so, that he wants to poison the well for Republicans running in 2014. He hasn't done a very good job of it, yet. There is one thing a president can do and that is raise money for its party whether he is popular or not. Nationally, Obama can raise money for his party, and he is doing a great deal of that.

You know one interesting thing about Obama, and I think reflects how his presidency has fallen apart, is the things that he says that are verifiably untrue. What you heard from Obama back in 2009 was somewhat vague and the facts were certainly debatable, but not specific and checkable. There have been a couple of them lately, including one last night in Chicago, when the president said, "We know the climate is warming faster than anybody anticipated five or ten years ago." Well of course in the last ten or fifteen years it hasn't warmed at all, as most people know. You know if a presidency is functioning properly somebody keeps the president from saying that. Now Obama may not listen to his aides, he has declared more than once that he is smarter than they are: a better speech writer, a better political analyst, and so on; but, that is what he said. And then there was one that I caught that I'm not sure many others did. It was at his press conference about six or eight weeks ago that he had sent Matthew Olsen, a head of the Director of National Counterterrorism Center, to a congressional hearing to declare that what had actually occurred in Benghazi was a terrorist attack. Early on he was saying it was a terrorist

attack and not that they were hiding behind this idea that it was this anti-Muslim video. Well in truth as one can discover with a minimum amount of reporting, Matthew Olsen had long been scheduled to appear before the committee. I believe it was the Senate Intelligence Committee, at an open hearing. It wasn't Obama who sent him at all. The truth is that his speech or testimony, which I have read, was all about cyber security. It had nothing to do with Benghazi. He didn't make a comment saying the Benghazi attack was a terrorist attack until he was asked a question by the Chairman of the Committee, Joe Lieberman. He was not sent there by Obama, and he was not sent there to declare it a terrorist attack, which just happened to come up. Well, that information was not hard to find out and Obama had to know that he hadn't sent him up there. He had to know that his testimony was not about Benghazi and a terrorist attack; it was about a completely different subject having to do with national security. So in this case, I think you could actually say that he lied. I see this an example of the decline of his presidency. He was allowed to say that, or he said it actually with impunity, except for something I wrote on it.

Many of you over the years have watched The McLaughlin Group on television, I suspect. John McLaughlin, of course, is a former Jesuit Priest who is still doing the show. He must be 107, or something. One of the last events I was involved in with him was when he was marrying a woman half his age, and I went to the bachelor party. A bachelor party with John McLaughlin is not like a bachelor party that, believe me, any of you all have ever been to unless you have been to that of a former Jesuit Priest marrying a woman half his age. He has since divorced her, by the way. We all gave toasts and the best toast came from a man named Mort Zuckerman. Now some of you all may recognize him because he owns a great deal of property in Washington, New York, and Boston. He is a billionaire, and John has had him on his show a number of times. Mort proposed a toast to John and he said, "John, your words will be remembered long after Shakespeare's are forgotten." John just beamed and then Zuckerman said, "But not until then." I'm sure that is true of mine. Anyway thank you all for having me.