

BRIAN WILLIAMS, MEET CAMERON TODD WILLINGHAM

Pretty much everyone seems to have waken up this morning still aghast at the wild applause Rick Perry got last night for his boast about the number of people he has executed.

It is disgusting.

But Brian Williams, who otherwise did a decent job as moderator, failed miserably here. How do you ask this question and not mention Cameron Todd Willingham?

Not only did Governor Perry deny Willingham's appeal for clemency even though an expert arson investigator had rebutted all the solid evidence in the case, Perry fired investigators who were about to provide Willingham's innocence.

Perry killed an innocent man and then engaged in a cover-up to hide that fact. The story of Cameron Todd Willingham deserves to be a central issue in Perry's campaign.

Yet Williams—even while he exposed Republicans as blood-thirsty kooks—failed to even mention Willingham's name.

OBAMA'S RE-ELECTION CAMPAIGN: DESTROYING THE COUNTRY TO SAVE IT

Much of the discussion about this Jeff Zeleny piece has focused on Obama's apparent consideration of cutting regulations that

“affect the economy.”

The president intends to offer at least some progressive proposals to help regain a fighting posture that he has not had since the health care debate, but a provision is also being discussed to place a new moratorium on some regulations that affect the economy, excluding health care and financial rules. The proposals are likely to infuriate an already unhappy Democratic base. [my emphasis]

Greg Sargent suggests we ought to wait to see precisely what Obama means by this; I agree, not because I have any faith in Obama, but because the syntax of this line is so strange. Does Zeleny mean “moratorium on new regulations”? A “moratorium—does that mean temporary or permanent—on existing regulations”? Who is doing the discussing here, Mr. Passive Voice Journalist?

In short, I think Zeleny has failed his job as stenographer.

Which is why I’m even more intrigued by this passage.

The Republican candidates, collectively and in distinctive ways, continue to cast him as the foil against whom they ran so successfully in 2010: a big-government liberal who has expanded regulations, created uncertainty for business and failed to revive the economy, with millions more Americans out of work than when he took office. They portray him as an unsteady leader who is unequipped to turn around a country in economic crisis. [my emphasis]

Again, the meaning here is unclear: Who is the “they” here? Does Zeleny mean to invoke the themes all Republicans used to run against Obama in 2010? Or just the ones running for President. I’m not sure Ron Paul “ran against” Obama in 2010, though Michele Bachmann and Rick Perry did. Both complained about health insurance reform, but largely in terms of “freedom” and

(particularly in the case of Perry the separatist, state's rights), not regulations. Perry complained about emissions restrictions, which is certainly a regulation, but Obama's already caved on that front.

Both Bachmann and Perry got caught hypocritically replying on government pork while attacking Obama's stimulus bill, and it's fair to say that Perry used stimulus funds to balance TX's budget, and given the number of government jobs TX has relied on, it's therefore safe to say Obama's stimulus created jobs Perry is taking credit for.

And both Bachmann and Perry called Obama a socialist.

But the theme ignores one of the big things Republicans, as a whole, ran against Obama on in 2010: "cutting Medicare" (in the health insurance reform).

Which makes me wonder whether this interpretation of the 2010 election is Zeleny's ... or the Obama team's?

It seems a critical issue because some seems to have simplified the reasons for the Democrats' shellacking in 2010, particularly given that voters still largely blamed Bush for the economy in 2010 (though they're doing so less now).

In any case, if Obama thinks he can embrace policies that will stop two fools who called a President who has coddled banksters "a socialist" from repeating that claim—if Obama believes that spoiling our air and water will make Bachmann and Perry be nice to him—it's simply not going to work.

But I do worry that's what he has in store.

ATTACKING ROMNEY RATHER THAN THE PEOPLE LOOTING OUR ECONOMY

This Politico story—"revealing" Obama's campaign plan to brand Multiple Choice Mitt as "weird"—has gotten a lot of attention in the twittersphere.

Barack Obama's aides and advisers are preparing to center the president's reelection campaign on a ferocious personal assault on Mitt Romney's character and business background, a strategy grounded in the early stage expectation that the former Massachusetts governor is the likely GOP nominee.

The dramatic and unabashedly negative turn is the product of political reality. Obama remains personally popular, but pluralities in recent polling disapprove of his handling of his job and Americans fear the country is on the wrong track. His aides are increasingly resigned to running for reelection in a glum nation. And so the candidate who ran on "hope" in 2008 has little choice four years later but to run a slashing, personal campaign aimed at disqualifying his likeliest opponent.

[snip]

The onslaught would have two aspects. The first is personal: Obama's reelection campaign will portray the public Romney as inauthentic, unprincipled and, in a word used repeatedly by Obama's advisers in about a dozen interviews, "weird."

"First, they've got to like you, and

there's not a lot to like about Mitt Romney," said Chicago Democratic consultant Pete Giangreco, who worked on Obama's 2008 campaign. "There's no way to hide this guy and hide his innate phoniness."

A senior Obama adviser was even more cutting, suggesting that the Republican's personal awkwardness will turn off voters.

"There's a weirdness factor with Romney and it remains to be seen how he wears with the public," said the adviser, noting that the contrasts they'd drive between the president and the former Massachusetts governor would be "based on character to a great extent."

Now, no matter how reprehensible this campaign strategy is (particularly for the way it feels like Mormon-bashing), and for all Politico probably feels it has "won the morning" by printing it, both are missing something.

This campaign has already been in place.

A significant chunk of the tweets the Michigan Democratic Party sends out, for example, focus on Romney—showing Obama leading him, playing up GOP opposition to him, dissing his fundraising, recalling his stance on the auto bailout, branding his appearance in MI his "hypocrisy tour," pitching other states' anti-Mitt swag. While it has gotten better of late, for a while the MDP focused more on Romney-bashing than on Rick Snyder-bashing—which of course meant no one was attacking Snyder's plan to tax seniors to pay for a tax cut for businesses.

Now, I understand MI may have a particularly driving reason to do this. Not only might Mitt's ties to MI give him a critical edge over Obama that could flip a crucial swing state. But even at the primary level, MI's cross-over voting might mean if Democrats support Romney, it could make a significant difference in him winning the

Republican primary.

Yet, again, this early focus on Mitt has distracted from where I would like Democratic messaging to be targeted—not only on Snyder, but on the businesses that have looted our country. I would suggest this might explain why MI Dems have such little confidence in their party right now.

Obama may feel like he needs to call Mitt names to win re-election. But if that's the sole purpose of the Democratic Party between now and then, it will leave a vacuum precisely where the most important messaging needs to be.

DSK CASE COLLAPSE: LAWYERS, PHONE CALLS & MONEY THE SHIT HITS THE FAN

The criminal case against Dominique Strauss-Kahn is over, at least in anything but the most technical of senses; now the focus shifts to the underlying dynamics and lawyering on the case.

NETROOTS NATION: MARCY WHEELER INTRODUCES GUEST OF HONOR RUSSELL

FEINGOLD

Please join me, Firedoglake, Netroots Nation, and the progressive enterprise as Marcy Wheeler welcomes one of us: Senator Russell Feingold.

OBAMA MISSES THE LESSON IN NY-26

Congratulations to Kathy Hochul, who rode a disciplined campaign against Paul Ryan's plan to privatize Medicare to victory in a Republican Congressional district tonight.

There's a lesson here. Republicans voted on Ryan's shitty plan. Which allowed Democrats to highlight how shitty it, and Republicans, are. And ... Victory!!!

Obama, however, seems to be missing that lesson:

I want to extend my congratulations to Congresswoman-elect Kathy Hochul for her victory in New York's 26th Congressional District. Kathy and I both believe that we need to create jobs, grow our economy, and reduce the deficit in order to outcompete other nations and win the future. Kathy has shown, through her victory and throughout her career, that she will fight for the families and businesses in western New York, and I look forward to working with her when she gets to Washington.

One corner of real America just made it very clear they don't want anyone messing with Medicare. And yet Obama's off negotiating just that, rather than making it clear that Republicans want to hold Medicare hostage along with the rest of the government.

BANKSTER-CODDLING PARTY SUFFERS “ELECTORAL MELTOWN”

Everyone knew that Fianna Fáil was going to lose Friday's election in Ireland. But the results (still coming in because the Irish hand count their paper ballots and have an instant runoff voting system) are pretty stunning. Here's how Fianna Fáil did in Laois-Offaly (both Mr. EW's home district and that of outgoing Taoiseach Brian Cowen) in 2007 (these graphics are from the Irish Times):



And here's how they did Friday:



And Laois-Offaly is going to be one of Fianna Fáil's stronger districts (Cowen's brother, Barry, will likely take one of the five seats). In Dublin, FF went from holding 13 seats in parliament to just one, that of the former Finance Minister Brian Lenihan. And the Green Party, which had been in coalition with FF, will lose all 6 of the seats it held.

Now, it's not clear that Fine Gael—which will rule with Labor—will be all that much better than FF with regards to coddling banksters. Rising Taoiseach Enda Kenny has promised to renegotiate the bailout, but unless and until he threatens to default, Ireland will still be taking money from retirees to pay off the banksters.

But what will be interesting is the presence of more further left members of Parliament. And Gerry Adams, Sinn Féin's President, will have a seat in the Republic's parliament for the first time. He's been getting a lot of press for his

populist criticism of the bailout:

Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams says a good government requires a good opposition, vowing his party would oppose the “swingeing, anti-citizen, economically-illiterate measures” being proposed by the establishment parties.

So it's not clear whether this “electoral meltdown” will have an effect on the banks. But it sure is interesting to see how political accountability works in a system with more than two parties.

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT RULES FOR RAHM EMANUEL BALLOT INCLUSION

The Illinois supreme Court has reversed the ruling striking Rahm Emanuel from the ballot and has ruled him fully eligible to be elected and serve as Mayor of Chicago.

RAHM'S BALLOT ELIGIBILITY CASE APPEAL AND WHITE HOUSE INTERFERENCE

President Barack Obama and his White House have interjected themselves into the state and local ballot litigation in an attempt to influence the

pending determination by the Illinois Supreme Court, and have coordinated and conspired with Rahm Emanuel to do so.

“AUSTERITY” MERRIAM- WEBSTER’S WORD OF 2010

Merriam-Webster has made “austerity” it’s word of the year for 2010.

Topping the list is *austerity*, defined as “enforced or extreme economy.” Lookups for *austerity* peaked dramatically several times throughout the year, as people’s attention was drawn to global economic conditions and the debt crises in Europe, but lookups also remained strong throughout the year, reflecting widespread use of the word in many contexts. “*Austerity* clearly resonates with many people,” said Peter Sokolowski, Editor at Large at Merriam-Webster, who monitors online dictionary searches. “We often hear it used in the context of government measures, but we also apply it to our own personal finances and what is sometimes called the new normal.”

I’m so cynical my first response was to wonder whether Pete Peterson had bought off the dictionary company like he did the Washington Post. But M-W says the list is based off of top online dictionary searches. Which is why some of the other words are perhaps more interesting:

- 4) socialism
- 5) bigot
- 7) shellacking

9) dissident

Remember, these reflect actual searches of the online dictionary. That suggests a significant proportion of the people still inclined to actually look things up in the dictionary chose (or needed) to refer to the dictionary to figure out what socialism actually is. And did Obama's use of the term "shellacking" send journalists and Obama fans to the dictionary to find out just how badly Democrats got whopped at the mid-terms?

Use this thread to predict what words will make up next year's list.