

HELEN WANTS HER MONEY BACK

Helen Thomas came back to work yesterday. In this video documenting her return, she revealed she voted for Barack Obama because she bought his change message.

Who'd I vote for? Obama. ... Because I really thought that he was a great gift to democracy, that it would show that the American people were fair and balanced and honorable and not, understood, didn't make any judgment in terms of race, color, creed, and so forth.

But it sounds like she wants her money back, now that she sees all the Clinton retreads he has hired since he got elected.

I'm still as mean as ever. I'm already going after Barack for saying that, in fact, I think that he's going after all the old Clinton faces. Why? Doesn't he know anybody?

[snip]

I think he's trying to get a lot of good people around him. At the same time I don't understand falling back on all the old faces. I mean, it seems to me if you want a new fresh start, you ought to have a fresh start.

Thus far, Obama has named two people to his White House staff—Rahm Emanuel and Robert Gibbs, and Biden has just named his Chief of Staff, Ron Klain). While Klain was Gore's Chief of Staff, Rahm is the big Clinton insider here. You think maybe Helen's not a fan of Rahm?

Dang. She's even more of a blogger than we knew.

BUSH TO DECLARE “ECONOMIC MISSION ACCOMPLISHED” TO G20

I'm as flabbergasted by this as Americablog's Chris is: George Bush is going to lecture the G20 today about how lovely free trade is.

President George W. Bush today will urge leaders of the world's biggest industrial and developing economies not to abandon principles of free-market capitalism as they seek a way out of an international financial crisis, calling it the "best system" for delivering growth.

Even better, the Dim Son is going to lecture his counterparts about the history of the financial crisis.

He will also review how the crisis began and how markets are more interconnected than in the past.

Haven't you heard, George? The victors get to write the history, and the US is probably not going to be the victor this time around.

In fact, this sounds like it will be an attempt to pre-empt a lot of the blame other leaders are ready to heap on Bush for the economic meltdown.

Leaders including Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and French President Nicolas Sarkozy have used the crisis to demand greater government control of markets and to attack the U.S. for failing to rein in investors and speculators.

[snip]

Officials overseas have heaped blame on the U.S. and the notion of unfettered markets promoted by Bush for sparking the crisis. German Chancellor Angela Merkel last month attacked "greed, speculation and mismanagement" and criticized the U.S. for ignoring her call of last year for stronger market regulation. Rudd said "the root of this malaise" lay in the "twin evils" of greed and fear that went unchecked because of "obscene" failures in oversight.

While defending capitalism as the "most efficient system ever created," Sarkozy has described as "over" the view that "everything could be solved by deregulation, free competition and the market."

And finally, do you find it at all amusing that the President who refuses to tell us which companies have gotten bailed out and has not yet appointed an Inspector General to oversee the bailout is going to lecture his counter-parts about transparency and regulation?

Bush will outline why markets should be subjected to greater transparency and appropriate regulation, while urging international financial leaders to strengthen cooperation, the White House said.

Which brings me to this whole "we have one president at a time" thing—the mantra that Obama keeps repeating. There was some question, at first, whether Obama would attend this meeting, since he's the one who will have to implement any new systems they agree on. And, just as importantly, since he's going to be a lot more amenable to increasing regulations than Bush is. Sure, Obama's sending representatives—Maddy Albright and Jim Leach—but he's not going to be at the meeting.

Which means this meeting is as much an opportunity for Bush to make an ass of himself one last time on the international stage as it will be to implement what few measures can't wait for Obama to become President officially. I'm sure Obama did the appropriate thing, legally and politically, in not showing up. But it really gives other world leaders one last chance to blame Bush before Obama comes in in January to start fixing things.

ANOTHER APPEAL FOR A WHITE HOUSE GARDEN

I've gotten a little weary with all the stories kibbitzing about what kind of dog the First Family should get. After all, Malia (who seems as smart as both her parents) did the research, and determined that the "optimal" dog would be a goldendoodle. Part of getting a dog is doing the research, and it seems Malia ought to be trusted with making her own decisions (provided Sasha agrees), without having to play to various interest groups.

Not so the appeals for the Obamas to set an example by turning part of the White House lawn into a garden. And I liked this video, so I decided to post it.

Meanwhile, if anyone wants some winter squash, just let me know. I had this really brilliant idea this year. Ever since I started my garden, I've consistently been gone for most or all of August, right in the middle of when veggies come in. So this year, knowing I'd be driving to Denver for the Convention, I decided to plant two crops that would hold until I got back: winter squash, and amaranth. Worked like a charm—except I now have a very full laundry basket of acorn squash in the basement, and I

just found three new squashes while raking yesterday. (The amaranth is probably dry now, so I've got to figure out how to separate the chaff—has anyone done that before?)

A NEW OBAMA-RAHM LEAK POLICY?

Maybe it's the addition of beltway leaker extraordinaire, Rahm Emanuel, to the team, but it appears that the Obama team may have adopted a new policy on leaks, departing from their eerily disciplined no-leak approach during the campaign.

Note this passage in NYT's coverage of Obama's request that Bush support a bailout for the auto industry.

The struggling auto industry was thrust into the middle of a political standoff between the White House and Democrats on Monday as President-elect Barack Obama urged President Bush in a meeting at the White House to support immediate emergency aid.

Mr. Bush indicated at the meeting that he might support some aid and a broader economic stimulus package if Mr. Obama and Congressional Democrats dropped their opposition to a free-trade agreement with Colombia, a measure for which Mr. Bush has long fought, people familiar with the discussion said. [my emphasis]

Here's how the WaPo reported the same detail.

Bush, speaking privately to Obama during their first Oval Office meeting, repeated his administration's stand that

he might support quick action on those bills if Democratic leaders drop their opposition to a Colombia trade agreement that Bush supports, according to people familiar with the discussions. [my emphasis]

And here's how Bush's team reported Bush's ire about these leaks to Drudge.

Just hours after President Bush and President-elect Obama met in the Oval Office of the White House, details of their confidential conversation began leaking out to the press, igniting anger from the president, sources claim.

"Senator Obama would be wise to keep close counsel," a top Bush source warned.

[snip]

Bush advisers view the leaks as an effort to undermine the president's remaining days in office.

"Senator Obama may not be familiar with a long-standing tradition of presidents holding their private conversations, private," a senior adviser explained to the DRUDGE REPORT. [my emphasis]

Seeing as how this obviously organized leak may well have come from the latest addition to the previously leak-proof Obama team—Rahm Emanuel—the Bushies aren't really in a position to lecture about what past Presidents have done. Rahm's been there, and was leaking in the Clinton days as well, I'm sure. (One other candidate to be the leaker is another Clinton veteran, John Podesta, though my money's on Rahm.)

So my question has more to do with the efficacy of the leak. Will Bush be more amenable to an auto bailout now that everyone knows he tried to hold American workers hostage to the fate of

Bush's union-busting buddy in Colombia, Alvaro
Uribe?