

Poll Driven Spin Doctors in the Age of Big Money Elections

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Global Research, July 28, 2015

[Common Dreams](#)

Region: [USA](#)

In-depth Report: [U.S. Elections](#)

For too long, candidates from both parties have been conducting a cynical game of asking us what we want to hear, then feeding it back to us in carefully managed sound bites, while they dance to the tune of corporations and the uber rich.

Leadership? At its best, this is like using a hood ornament to navigate. In practice, it results in a shameful mix of mush-mouthed lies of omission and outright lies of commission.

But for the first time in ages, we have an alternative.

Let's look at the field.

First, we've got Hillary, "Not-at-this-time" Clinton

Ms Clinton's campaign has already spent [\\$1 million](#) on polling, focus groups, and assorted other "messaging" strategies. She's not doing this so she can tell us the truth – she's doing it so she can tell us what she thinks we want to hear.

This leaves her free to raise money from Wall Street, big banks and fat cats, just like her Republican counterparts.

Proof of this is her new favorite response when she's backed into a corner and is forced to come up with an answer: "Not at this time," or "Not yet."

For example, a couple of weeks ago, a reporter cornered her and asked about her position on the TPP (something she's supported in the past). Her answer? The best she could come up with was, "listen to Nancy Pelosi," then followed it up a few days later saying she "...probably" would not vote for it ...*at this time* ..." Squishiness thy name is Hillary.

Then at a recent Town Hall meeting in New Hampshire, when Elaine Colligan, of [350.org](#), [asked](#) Clinton, "Will you commit to banning fossil fuel extraction on public lands in this country ... yes or no will you ban this?" Ms. Clinton gave an answer that was nearly indistinguishable from something Exxon might say. Although she supports stimulating renewables, when it comes to a ban on extracting fossil fuels from public lands, she basically said, *not yet* ... claiming that we needed it "to run our economy."

As Hansen's recent paper makes clear, we must act quickly to cut fossil fuels. Moreover, we have the technology to [do it cheaply](#) and quickly. Fostering solar is all well and good, but if you're serious about tackling climate change a ban on extracting fossil fuels from public lands makes sense and wouldn't cost us much – unless you happen to be an oil, gas or coal

company.

But stating a clear position like that would risk alienating some folks with money. What to do? Get squishy with it.

But it's not just trade or energy policy – this kind of prevaricating is all too typical of Hillary Clinton. Her strategy seems to be to reveal as little as possible and commit to nothing, and lies of omission are a critical part of her arsenal.

As a result, her messaging is so stilted, so rehearsed, so artificial she comes across like a used car salesman. That's why [people don't trust her](#).

Lies by Commission – the Republican Clown Car

For years, Republican's have been following the advice of messaging guru Frank Luntz and this crop of clowns is no different.

Thanks to Luntz, Republicans have given us such oxymoronic names as *the Healthy Forest Initiative*, a program to let lumber barons cut more trees on public lands, and *The Clear Skies Initiative*, a program designed to gut clean air regulations for wealthy fossil fuel interests. Can you get any more Orwellian?

Speaking of Big Brother, let's look at some of the basic tenets of the Republican's Platform.

Republicans favor free markets and are against Big Government

Ever since Reagan, Republicans have been hawking this BS like carnie barkers on speed – but a quick look at the [tax code](#), or at [corporate subsidies](#) – most of which was pushed by Republicans — shows that all that free market stuff doesn't apply to fat cats, only consumers, or small businesses like solar and wind energy manufacturers.

And they have no problem inserting Big Brother into your pants, telling you who you may marry, what sexual practices you may or may not use etc etc ... or having Big Brother conduct warrantless eavesdropping, extraordinary rendition or any of a host of other assaults on our civil rights.

It seems Big Brother is only a problem when it protects the environment, gives workers a level playing field, provides the market with information, or tames the financial sector – particularly by curbing corporate excesses.

Republicans want to balance the budget and cut deficits

Well this is true, right? It's a core part of all the pitch coming from all the Republican candidates pouring out of the clown car.

Well, here again, not so much.

Each year, Paul Ryan proposes [an absurd budget](#) that jacks up the deficit, provides giant giveaways to corporations and fat cats while screwing the poor and middle class, invoking the magic fairy dust of “dynamic scoring” (a name designed to give the widely discredited “trickle down” some respectability) to achieve a faux balance. And each year Republicans unanimously vote to approve this budget busting pornography, *while simultaneously*

yammering about deficits.

The reason you don't know this is largely just cynical posturing is because the press regularly reports on Ryan's deficit-exploding budgets as if they were plausible – or even “serious.” Yeah, that's what you can get away with when you convince the media that *balance* is part of the journalistic canon ...

The fact is, most of the positions the Republican candidates embrace are either [dictated to them by their fat cat donors](#) or designed to distract people with fear, hate, bigotry or blame, so they'll be too addled to see how badly Republican policies are screwing everyone but the uber-rich.

What About Bernie?

Want to know how much Bernie Sanders has spent on polling in his bid for the nomination? Nothing. Zero. Zip. When asked about this, his campaign manager said the reason they're not spending money on polling is because it wouldn't influence anything Sanders was saying. That's because he's telling you what he believes, not some fractured spin on what he thinks you want to hear, or a bunch of outright lies.

His manager went on to say they might do some polling later on to help them decide where to run ads, but that's it. Bernie's message is based on looking at the facts and telling us the truth he gleans from them.

What a concept.

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