Obama Brings Chicago-Style Intimidation

by Phyllis Schlafly August 14, 2009

Obama's staff and retreads from the Clinton Administration are using Chicago-style intimidation to rescue his extravagant health-care bill from its decline in public opinion polls.

A congressional Town Hall meeting on August 6 reminds us of a memorable political moment when Bill Clinton and his chief aides were in Little Rock celebrating his 1992 election. Heady with victory, Chicago staffer Rahm Emanuel demonstrated how he planned to punish political enemies by plunging his steak knife into the table and screaming "Dead!" as he named each target.

At Rep. Russ Carnahan's (D-MO) Town Hall meeting on August 6, SEIU (Service Employees International Union) thugs, clad in purple shirts, punched in the face, brutally beat, and kicked in the head when he was down, an African American named Kenneth Gladney while hurling a torrent of racial slurs. The SEIU goons were following White House advice: "Don't do a lot of talking," and if they encounter resistance, "punch back twice as hard."

The Purple Shirt Brigade picked on Gladney because he was passing out historical American flags with the inscription "Don't Tread On Me," and the Left won't tolerate African Americans as conservatives. Gladney was taken to the hospital, and six people were arrested.

We are seeing a coordinated smear on those who oppose socialized medicine. Democratic National Committee spokesman Brad Woodhouse mislabeled them as "angry mobs of rabid right-wing extremists."

The Obama supporters are trying to make it appear that those opposing socialism in health care are "manufactured" protesters, as falsely alleged by White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs, and in MSNBC's Chris Matthews' words, a "Brooks Brothers Brigade." Majority Leader Harry Reid calls them "Astroturf" to pretend that those opposing Obama's health-care bill are artificial grass roots.

The opponents of socialized medicine are just ordinary citizens, many of whom (like Kenneth Gladney) had never before attended a political meeting, and many who are alumni of the spontaneous Tea Parties. There is no evidence that they are organized and financed by the insurance companies, or even by the Republican Party.

On the other hand, there is evidence that Obama's "punch back" tactics are organized. MoveOn.org sent out a "Dear MoveOn member" email stating, "We've got a plan to fight back against these radical right-wingers. We've hired skilled grassroots organizers who are working with thousands of local volunteers to show Congress that ordinary Americans continue to support President Obama's agenda for change. And we're building new online tools to track events across the country and make sure MoveOn members turn out at each one."

Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel is also using intimidation to make the public believe that the Stimulus spending is solving the unemployment problem. He orchestrated four letters to Arizona Governor Jan Brewer from four Cabinet Secretaries threatening to cut off Arizona's federal funding because of Senator Jon Kyl's (R-AZ) criticism of the Stimulus.

A letter to Emanuel from Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), ranking member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, described the threat, which Issa called "Chicago-style tactics." Issa wrote, "While this type of scare tactic may work in Chicago, it will not work to intimidate me or other Members of the United States Congress."

Since Emanuel's "punch back" tactics are now becoming nationally known, it's no wonder that Americans are apprehensive about the White House plan to build a database of citizens who oppose Obama's health care legislation. The database will be secret, but the fact that the White House is building it has leaked out.

On August 3, Obama's media people posted on the White House website a notice complaining that "disinformation about health insurance reform" may be spread "via chain emails or through casual conversation." The word goes out to Obamaites: "Since we can't keep track of all of them here at the White House, we're asking for your help."

What kind of help is the White House requesting? The instruction to Obama devotees states: "If you get an email or see something on the web about health insurance reform that seems fishy, send it to flag@whitehouse.gov." As Senator John Cornyn (R-TX) said, "it is inevitable that the names, email address, IP addresses, and private speech of U.S. citizens will be reported to the White House" (where Rahm Emanuel is director-in-chief of Chicago-style retaliation and intimidation).

No doubt Emanuel knows that the White House is not covered by the Freedom of Information Act, which means he can keep the names on the database secret for political purposes, and that the Presidential Records Act requires the White House to preserve its records without having to release them to the public for more than ten years.

Late breaking news: Senator Claire McCaskill (D-MO) just announced that at her next Town Hall meeting, she will answer only selected written questions and not allow anyone to speak.