

Ol' Al is at it again

I had hoped that once Wyoming voters said "enough of the Simpson clan," we'd enjoy a brief respite from their names being all over our news. Colin left a safe seat in the Wyoming House to run for Governor and the best he could do was double-cross fellow Republican Rita Meyer by mailing out a slimey flyer just before the primary to help Matt Mead. Simpson finished last in the primary.

Ol' Al's performance at the Clarence Thomas hearing put to rest the Simpson's respect for women. While witnesses at that hearing were under oath, committee members were not. So, Al could say, for the world to see on CNN, that he had received reams of documentation against Anita Hill "over the transom." He did not and could not produce any of it. He, like those in Washington, expected the American people to take him at his word. Republicans may have, most scoffed.

His betrayal of longtime friend Ray Hunkins just before the primary election of 2002 again showed Alan Simpson's colors. He will say or do anything to advance his own interest. It was expected he would do similar to try to help his son Colin prevail in the 2010 Republican primary election for governor and while he tried, Colin was such a weak candidate that even his dad couldn't help.

Al Simpson always talked about the partisanship that had consumed D.C. and he was one of its great practioners. His pattern is to say one thing and do another. He hates the "East Coast establishment" but couldn't wait to go to work for an Ivy League college after he left the Senate. He parlayed a fair sense of humor into gigs on television talk shows in Washington and is always good for a one-liner, often funny only to him. He fashions himself a second coming of Will Rogers.

When Barack Obama formed a committee to tell him how to balance the budget and deal with the national debt, one Republican he knew he could call on to give the committee a pretense of bipartisanship was Ol' Al. Obama also knew that no one would pay much attention to what the old coot had to say. Now, Al's beginning to say things and, as Obama counted on, no one takes him seriously.

As the Plan unfolds, special interest groups of all sorts will surface to oppose part of or all of the proposals. For some reason, Simpson and his co-chair of the doomed committee, Erskine Bowles, jumped the gun and started to "run it up the flagpole to see if anyone salutes" ahead of a formal unveiling of the steps to be recommended to reduce deficit spending and the federal debt. No salutes.

Can anything meaningful be done to reduce the deficit and debt? Will anything be done? Probably not. And, probably not. The next two years will see Congress mired in gridlock of the worst sort. Party-line votes are now the norm. Without crossover votes, the Senate will vote one way, the House the other and the Obamas will travel again to Indonesia.

Political will and political courage just do not exist in large enough measure to accomplish anything. Even though some of the proposed changes wouldn't take effect for decades, no one wants to go home to face senior voters after pushing the notion of raising the age to receive full Social Security benefits to 69 by the year 3027. Means testing of the filthy rich seems reasonable - to those of us who are not filthy rich. Social Security benefits were promised on the basis of what a worker paid in, not how wealthy they were at retirement age. We will have to set up re-education camps like they did in Vietnam after that war so Americans can be taught that everything they believed and/or were told over decades of their lives is not so anymore.

It will be interesting to watch the Plan be presented, then opponents of all stripes work the Sunday talk show circuit, *Washington Post* and *New York Times* to explain why the part that affects them or their constituents is wrong - why they can't support that part of the proposal. Urban folks who do not have "farms" (like Sam Donaldson has) will support reductions in farm subsidies. Those who are not invested in any way in the stock market will support higher capital gains taxes. And the country will form the proverbial circular firing squad, opposing any change that will impact them adversely and supporting everything that will affect others adversely. Such is the state of the nation right now. And Al Simpson will again be ignored but dropping his corny one liners on *Meet the Press*, *This Week*, *Fox News Sunday*, CNN, etc. Not Oprah, though.

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Are TSA agents groping passengers?

Having airport security personnel confiscate my Right Guard and shampoo makes it look like I got off easy. Now, they're being accused of groping passengers - including airline employees.

For a very long time after a nutso had some sort of explosive(s) sewn into his underwear and was prevented from detonating it over Detroit, security seemed content to have us walk through the screening device. Then, some airports installed body x-rays and travelers could opt to walk through it as opposed to the other device. Or a pat down.

When news came out that screeners could see far more than was claimed, more and more passengers objected to

that level of scrutiny when they just wanted to travel to a warmer climate for vacation. Not be ogled. Til they got there.

Unless TSA and the federal government are keeping it underwraps, no one has been thwarted from carrying explosives on board by the screening process they've endured. Some of us have lost toiletries out of a carry-on bag but no one has had explosives or box cutters taken as far as we've been told.

Now, probably in response to the cargo planes carrying toner cartridges with explosives, TSA wants to grope more passengers. When pilots and flight attendants tell them "hands off," the rest of us shouldn't have to tolerate groping either.

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