

## Elephants & Donkeys by Katherine R. Notley

### Cat got Bush's tongue?

"Bizarre even by the standards of Bush-speak," is how the London *Guardian's* Simon Tisdall characterized an outburst by George Bush in Colorado Springs Aug. 6, during a discussion with "an astonished group of conservative legislators," when he compared himself to a Roman gladiator who escaped certain death by biting a lion in the groin.

Tisdall continued, "As the audience looked on in stunned silence, the President triumphantly explained the metaphor. The lion with the newly acquired falsetto roar was Bill Clinton." After this incident, Tisdall wrote, it was "not entirely surprising" that the White House announced that four speechwriters had been sacked on Aug. 7.

"The whiff of the circus accompanied Mr. Bush on other campaign stump stops this week, although the classical references grew confusing," said Tisdall. In one campaign stop, the President vowed: "I think there's a Trojan Horse lurking in the weeds, ready to pull a fast one on the American people. And I am simply not ready to let that happen."

Then, in Reno, Nevada, he spoke of the "Pavlovian impulse to raise taxes at every turn."

The London weekly the *Economist* also lampooned Bush's malapropisms. Under the heading, "Deconstruction and the White House," a recent issue had the following item, accompanied by a cartoon of a George Bush with his tongue tied in knots:

"As George Bush contemplates the prospect of changing careers, he might consider returning to his alma mater, Yale University. Most politicians who retire to academia find their natural slots in departments of government or politics; Mr. Bush may be

an exception. His real home is surely Yale's department of comparative literature.

"It is there that the theory of deconstruction, which holds that words have no fixed meaning, has flowered most extravagantly. One literary critic, David Lehman, argues that, 'sooner or later the initiate into the mysteries of deconstruction must prepare to visit a linguistic abyss.' . . .

"Or dwell on a maxim offered by Paul De Man, the late doyen of the Yale school of deconstructionists. De Man held that rhetoric 'allows for two incompatible mutually self-destructive points of view, and therefore puts an insurmountable obstacle in the way of any reasoning or understanding.'

"Now consider two celebrated Bushisms: 'People understand that Congress bears a greater responsibility for this—but I'm not trying to assign blame'; or 'All I was doing was appealing for an endorsement, not suggesting you endorse it.' Even if Mr. Bush is refused a post at Yale, he could stay on as an object for study."

### Donkeys jockeying for posts

According to Morton Kondracke's column in the Aug. 6 issue of the Capitol Hill newspaper *Roll Call*, "conservative" Democrats have been holding a series of meetings to negotiate their support of—and possible representation in—a Clinton administration.

On July 21, Rep. Dave McCurdy (D-Okla.) and Clinton issues advisers Michael Mandelbaum, Tony Lake, and Sandy Berger met with Richard Schifter, former defense official James Woolsey, and Adrian Karatnycky, foreign policy assistant to

AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland.

Also at the July 21 meeting were Peter Rosenblatt, Penn Kemble, American-Israeli Public Affairs Committee counsel David Ifshin, "neo-conservative" writer Ben Wattenberg, former Pentagon official Walt Slocum, and Josh Muravchik of the American Enterprise Institute.

Many of these people were backers of the late Sen. Henry "Scoop" Jackson and members of the Coalition for a Democratic Majority. These "conservatives" supported Jimmy Carter, but were then kept out of the Carter administration. On July 29 Mandelbaum and McCurdy met with Carter's former national security adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

According to Kondracke, the favorites for cabinet positions among these "hardliners" are: Rep. Steve Solarz (D-N.Y.) for secretary of state; McCurdy, Woolsey, Les Aspin (D-Wis.) or Sen. Sam Nunn (D-Ga.) for defense secretary, and Mandelbaum for national security adviser. This crew is also trying to target Republicans who might be attracted to a tough Clinton foreign policy.

Meantime, Bill Clinton is pulling a number of top advisers from an elite organization called "Renaissance." The bipartisan group meets annually in Hilton Head, S.C. According to a study of the group published by *Legal Times*, the membership includes Justice Harry Blackmun, Reagan-Bush speechwriter Peggy Noonan, Richard Thornburgh, Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, Florida Gov. Lawton Chiles, Republican strategist David Keene, Bush education secretary Lamar Alexander and Susan Porter Rose, Barbara Bush's chief of staff.

Some critics called the group "a cozy gathering of like-minded members of the Southern elite," according to *Legal Times*.