

July 28, 2013

A number of our favorites commented on the never ending "pivot to the economy."

Andrew Malcolm starts us off.

One way to look at President Obama's latest speech tour beginning today:

'President Obama takes his firm commitment to grow the American economy on the road today, stopping in Illinois and Missouri to urge creation of thousands of new jobs to continue expansion of the middle-class within the heartland and across this great nation.

"The President will deliver remarks at Knox College," the White House announced with excitement, "to kick off a series of speeches that will lay out his vision for rebuilding an economy that puts the middle class and those fighting to join it front and center."

Another way to look at Obama's latest speech tour:

"Lord spare us, the nation's most addicted campaigner heads out for -- what? -- the 84th time today to call on somebody to do something about the country's stubbornly stagnant economy to finally create the hundreds of thousands of new jobs he and Joe promised more than four years ago when he started spending trillions of our dollars.

Obama has pivoted to the jobs meme so often since Jan. 20, 2009, that he needs new soles on his shoes. Remember when Scott Brown became the first Republican to win a Massachusetts Senate seat in four decades? Obama, who'd been pushing financial reform and ObamaCare, said he got that message loud and clear. He'd turn to j-o-b-s".

According to Obama's White House, which hosted the Louisville Cardinals NCAA champion basketball team Tuesday and will welcome the World Series San Francisco Giants next Monday, Republicans have taken their eye off the ball by not focusing on the country's top challenge: Jobs.

Joe Biden, by the way, the three-letter J-O-B-S man appointed to oversee stimulus effectiveness, is off in India and Singapore these days doing something....

Before we go back to our guys, how about a certified liberal like Dana Milbank of WaPo.

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This was tantalizing. What would this top White House official be doing? Singing karaoke on the North Lawn? Getting a "POTUS" tattoo on his arm?

Reality was rather more prosaic. Pfeiffer was announcing the rollout of a series of economic speeches Obama would begin on Wednesday — roughly the 10th time the White House has made such a pivot to refocus on jobs and growth. What would set this one apart is that Obama would be reprising a speech he made eight years ago, when he first became a senator; Pfeiffer

included a link to clips from that speech, set in part to mood music from the Canadian electronica group Kidstreet, the same music used in an Apple ad last year.

But even a reincarnated Steve Jobs would have trouble marketing this turkey: ...

Here's Byron York.

"Obama's "new" direction is a repeat of something he has done many times in the past. At various points in his presidency — always with a backdrop of prolonged and painful unemployment — the president has directed his attention to non-economic issues, only to decide that he must "pivot" back to the economy in the face of declining poll numbers or an approaching election. Given that pattern, some Republicans found Obama's latest move bitterly amusing.

"The president says he's going to go out and 'pivot' back to jobs," said House Speaker John Boehner Tuesday. "Well, welcome to the conversation, Mr. President. We've never left it."...

Jennifer Rubin is not as polite.

... He is never so comfortable as when he is campaigning against government, assuming the posture of a professorial bystander in his own administration.

He protests that scandals are "phony," but polls show otherwise, especially when it comes to the Internal Revenue Service. And, of course, the scandals would end more quickly if he ever came clean, disgorged all the information at the beginning and stuck to one story.

The Obama routine gets tiresome after five years. It seems not to dawn on him that his opponents don't think his policy recommendations (new taxes, Obamacare) are good for the country. And the country on many issues agrees with them. To protest the Obama agenda is to cause "gridlock" and "play politics," in his view.

One can imagine that the trio of speeches is intended to do little more than pump up Obama's troops in advance of the fall budget fights. This has been his approach to governance from the get-go — rile his supporters, denigrate opponents and then complain to the voters. ...

James Pethokoukis points out five job stats that did not get presidential mention.

3. About half of the jobs created during the first half of 2013, and a large majority of the jobs created in Q2 2013, appear to have been part-time jobs that offer employees as little as one hour of work per week, and up to 35 hours of work.

4. After falling from a recession high of 9.2 million to a post-recession low of 7.6 million at the end of Q1 2013, the number of people saying they are working part time because they can't find full time work (part time for economic reasons) crept back up to 8.2 million, double pre-recession levels.

David Harsanyi says all this provides an opportunity for the GOP and they are blowing it.

... So what do Republicans do? Obama quipped that repealing Obamacare and cutting spending isn't an economic plan. Well, actually it's as good an economic plan Obama produced. This year, over 830,000 Americans are new part-time workers and 97,000 fewer of them have full-time positions. Poll after poll finds that small business are cutting back or hiring fewer full time workers due to Obamacare. Other polls show Obamacare's popularity decreasing as implementation ratchets up.

Yet, broadly speaking, he's correct; there has to be more. Republicans offer no inspiring alternative. It is incomprehensible that the GOP hasn't devised some palpable and bold 10-step economic plan (with some nifty title like "A Better Bargain") that deals with crony capitalism, government overreach and economic growth. Even before the speech was given, Eric Cantor's office was touting Republican alternatives to Obama's non-plan. 1 – Urge the Democratic controlled Senate to join the House and Pass a Job Training Bill. 2 – Approve the Keystone Pipeline. 3 – Support the Bipartisan Effort to Expand Offshore Domestic Energy Production.

Seriously? That's it? ...

James Taranto calls it the "politics of contempt."

... Obama's speech was a dreadful, cliché-ridden piece of writing. Here's our favorite bit: "Rather than reduce our deficits with a scalpel--by cutting programs we don't need, fixing ones we do, and making government more efficient--this same group has insisted on leaving in place a meat cleaver called the sequester that has cost jobs, harmed growth, hurt our military, and gutted investments in American education and scientific and medical research that we need to make this country a magnet for good jobs."

Because as Ben Franklin sagely observed, you can't make a magnet with cloven meat.

But wait. It's worse than that. He's criticizing "this same group" for *leaving in place* a meat cleaver. What happens when you leave a cleaver in place? Nothing!

"With an endless parade of distractions, political posturing and phony scandals, Washington has taken its eye off the ball," the president harrumphed. There's an image for you. Where exactly is the ball relative to the parade route?

Also, which scandals exactly are "phony"? The biggest scandal is the one that raises serious questions about the legitimacy of Obama's re-election. Here is what President Asterisk himself had to say on the subject way back on May 13: "If you've got the IRS operating in anything less than a neutral and non-partisan way, then that is outrageous, it is contrary to our traditions. And people have to be held accountable, and it's got to be fixed. . . . I've got no patience with it. I will not tolerate it."

We're sure his outrage over the phony scandal was *genuine*. ...

J. Christian Adams calls him President Alinsky.

You can take the community organizer out of the South Side, but you can't take the community organizer out of the community organizer.

Today, America heard threats from the increasingly predictable President Alinsky.

"The position of the middle class will erode further," Mr. Obama said. "Inequality will continue to increase, money's power will distort our politics even more. Social tensions will rise, as various groups fight to hold on to what they have, start blaming somebody else for why their position isn't improving. That's not the America we know."

This is standard-fare Das Kapital by Karl Marx. Obama doesn't even attempt to disguise it, leaving out only the original author's name. Obama merely adds the threat of social tensions.

For that, thank speech co-author Saul Alinsky. ...

Investors Business Daily

[1,646 days in, Obama says the economy remains his top concern again](#)

by Andrew Malcolm

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According to Obama's White House, which hosted the Louisville Cardinals NCAA champion basketball team Tuesday and will welcome the World Series San Francisco Giants next

Monday, Republicans have taken their eye off the ball by not focusing on the country's top challenge: Jobs.

Joe Biden, by the way, the three-letter J-O-B-S man appointed to oversee stimulus effectiveness, is off in India and Singapore these days doing something.

Obama has never met a problem he couldn't throw a speech at. Just since his unfortunate reelection last November with 8.3 million fewer votes than 2008, the Democrat has pivoted to an unalterable commitment to new gun controls. Which required a tour of speeches.

Which was followed by his new top commitment to immigration reform. Which required a tour of speeches. Remember how devastating sequestration was certain to be? Not!

Which was followed by a national security vision for a new world. Which only took one speech because foreign affairs are boring and Obama would rather not talk about his failures in Egypt, Libya, Syria, etc.. Which was followed by climate control, the latest must-do ASAP top priority.

Not counting side excursions into terrorism, drones and [another promised closing of Guantanamo](#). Also [housecleaning some top generals](#).

Which was followed last Friday by [out-of-the-blue gratuitous remarks about the Trayvon Martin case](#), which no one had asked for. Each time, the former state senator returns to the economy.

And, hey, if this latest jobs tour gets your mind off dirty words like Benghazi, IRS, FBI, ObamaCare, NSA, individual mandates, Fast and Furious, Solyndra, Keystone yada-yada, well, that's OK with this White House.

Here's what we have as a result of Obama's intermittent commitment to the economy: The weakest economic recovery since a generation before Obama was born. The longest stretch ever of unemployment at 7.5% or above.

In Obama's presidency nearly three million more Americans have fallen into poverty. Fourteen million more are on food stamps. And here's [a stunner stat](#): Median American family income fell more during Obama's faux recovery than it did during the original recession. Yes, we can't.

[With little media attention, Obama's polls have been sliding](#) for some time.

One group that hasn't taken its eye off the ball: Voters. The economy/jobs were their top concerns when Obama took office with a 60% approval rating. And they remain the top concern now that his job approval on the economy has slid to 45% in the new Washington Post/ABC News Poll.

Sixty percent of those folks believe the country is on the wrong track. Only 36% think right track.

Last month, as usual, [the latest IBD/TIPP Presidential Poll](#) was the first to uncover "the worst monthly decline in Obama's 53 months of not spending much time in the Oval Office to the lowest approval level of the Democrat's entire presidency."

Others now confirm that plummet. The new [Wall Street Journal/NBC News Poll](#) puts Obama's overall job approval at just 45%, 11 points beneath Bill Clinton's at the same second-term stage and the exact same as that loser George W. Bush, who's caused every Obama problem.

So, today Obama returns to Knox College, the scene of the fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate of 1858 and a much-forgotten commencement address Obama gave eight years ago. Knox is in Illinois, Obama's adopted home state, where unemployment is stuck at 9.2% and the approval rating of the governor, fellow Democrat Pat Quinn, is but 25%.

Obama strategists may think by comparison those numbers make their boss look good. If anyone's still paying attention.

Washington Post

[A warmed-over jobs message](#)

by Dana Milbank

"I don't normally do this," President Obama's senior adviser Dan Pfeiffer wrote in the subject line of an e-mail blast to reporters Sunday night.

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But even a reincarnated Steve Jobs would have trouble marketing this turkey: How can the president make news, and remake the agenda, by delivering the same [message he gave in 2005](#)? He's even giving the speech from the same place, Galesburg, Ill.

White House officials say this will show Obama's consistency. "We plead guilty to the charge that there is a thematic continuity that exists between the speech the president will give in Galesburg, at Knox College on Wednesday, and his [speech in Osawatomie](#) [Kansas, in 2011] and his speech back at Knox College in 2005," White House press secretary Jay Carney said.

Yes, but this also risks sending the signal that, just six months into his second term, Obama is fresh out of ideas. There's little hope of getting Congress to act on major initiatives and little appetite in the White House to fight for bold new legislation that is likely to fail. And so the president, it seems, is going into reruns.

In fairness, the 2005 speech was on the timeless theme of the need for education, training, regulations and tax changes to preserve the middle class. "The true test of the American ideal," he said then, is "whether we build a community where, at the very least, everyone has a chance to work hard, get ahead and reach their dreams."

That message was so good he repeated it in 2011 in Kansas, where he said, “This country succeeds when everyone gets a fair shot, when everyone does their fair share, when everyone plays by the same rules.”

But while that message remains relevant, Obama is now facing a Republican opposition that, by House Speaker John Boehner’s own account, is measuring its success [by how many laws it can undo](#). There’s no longer serious talk about a grand bargain that could reform entitlement programs and the tax code. Legislators and administration officials have little hope of doing more than short-term skirmishing over the debt ceiling and mindless spending cuts in the “sequester.”

If he’s to break through the resistance, Obama will need some bold new proposals. That’s why his speech returning to the oldies would seem to confirm that the White House has given up on big achievements.

To build interest in the new series of speeches, the White House scheduled an invitation-only briefing (RSVP required) for Monday, then set cloak-and-dagger ground rules requiring that the briefers not be quoted, even anonymously. Reporters protested, but they needn’t have worried: The official who gave the briefing made clear that there would be no new policies announced, at least not major ones and not initially.

Pfeiffer told me Tuesday that the president, in his series of speeches, will eventually get around to ideas about “some things Congress could do, things they should do but probably won’t in the near term, and executive actions the president can take himself.”

I admire Pfeiffer’s pluck in trying to generate enthusiasm for what is largely a news-free initiative. And it’s smart politics for Obama to keep his emphasis on economic matters. But it would be easier to rally enthusiasm if he gave supporters something big, bold and new to reach for, rather than leftover proposals coupled with lofty ideals.

“It will be a pretty good speech,” Obama told activists this week at a gathering of Organizing for America, an outgrowth of his campaign. “But as we’ve learned, I’ve given some pretty good speeches before, and then things still get stuck here in Washington, which is why I’m going to need your help.”

True, but with three years to go in his presidency, Obama needs to help his supporters help him — by giving them the power of fresh ideas.

Washington Examiner

[Polls falling, agenda stalling, Obama turns to economy](#)

by Byron York

President Obama, who has spent his second term so far pressing for higher taxes, gun control, immigration reform, and climate change, says “phony debate and nonsense” have distracted Washington away from the economy, which is the issue that matters most to the American people. To bring the capital’s attention back to what is most important, the president is traveling

to his home state Wednesday, to Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, to discuss his plans for the economy.

“I’m going to talk about where we need to go from here,” Obama told officials of Organizing for Action, the spinoff of his 2008 and 2012 campaigns, at a gathering Monday night in one of Washington’s glitziest hotels, the Mandarin Oriental. Obama said his Illinois speech would concentrate on “how we need to put behind us the distractions and the phony debate and nonsense that somehow passes for politics these days, and get back to basics, refocus on what it is that everybody is talking about around the kitchen table, what people are talking about day to day with their families.”

Obama told OFA he will use the speech to kick off a long period “of us trying to get Washington and the press to refocus on the economy and the struggles that middle-class families are going through.”

Obama’s pledge comes as the RealClearPolitics average of polls shows his job approval rating at 45.4 percent, against a disapproval rating of 48.9 percent. Obama has been underwater in the RCP average for all of June and now July, a situation some Republicans attribute to the various woes and scandals of his second term: IRS, Benghazi, NSA surveillance, spying on reporters. But it’s important to remember that Obama’s problems come in the context of a continuing high unemployment rate. It’s 7.6 percent now, and has never been lower than 7.5 percent during Obama’s entire time in the White House. The so-called U-6 rate, which adds to the unemployed those who are working part time but want to work full time, along with those who have given up searching for a job, is 14.3 percent.

Obama’s “new” direction is a repeat of something he has done many times in the past. At various points in his presidency — always with a backdrop of prolonged and painful unemployment — the president has directed his attention to non-economic issues, only to decide that he must “pivot” back to the economy in the face of declining poll numbers or an approaching election. Given that pattern, some Republicans found Obama’s latest move bitterly amusing.

“The president says he’s going to go out and ‘pivot’ back to jobs,” said House Speaker John Boehner Tuesday. “Well, welcome to the conversation, Mr. President. We’ve never left it.”

“The idea that the White House can simply ‘pivot’ to jobs for a day or two, then abandon it for a few weeks or months, then pivot back again for a couple days, really epitomizes an attitude that turns people off from politics,” said Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

But now Obama is, in fact, pivoting back to jobs. But the one thing his record suggests is that the pivot will be temporary, while American anxieties about the economy are lasting. In the 2012 exit polls, 59 percent of voters in the presidential election listed the economy as their main concern — far ahead of health care, with 18 percent. In the 2008 exit polls, 63 percent of voters said the economy was their main concern — far, far ahead of the war in Iraq, with ten percent. Thus, it has always been clear that jobs and the economy are Americans’ main concern. As obvious as that seems, though, it’s something the president appears to understand only now and then.

Right Turn_ Obama's recycled rhetoric

by Jennifer Rubin

The president gave the first of three economic speeches Wednesday. Considering [the reviews across the political spectrum](#), he might consider canceling the next two.

As we were warned, there was nothing approaching a new policy proposal. Instead, as he is accustomed to doing, Obama took himself out of the political equation, decrying that [others' politics were responsible for the lack of progress on the economy](#). He, you see, is above politics; it's the other people who aren't looking out for the country's best interests. He commands that gridlock "must stop." (He should be pleased that Senate Democrats just ended their revolt over his [student loan proposal](#), another instance in which his fumbling wasted precious time.)

As usual, he chides "Washington" (where does he live?) for getting distracted (perhaps by gun control, sequester hysteria, etc.). He is never so comfortable as when he is campaigning against government, assuming the posture of a professorial bystander in his own administration.

He protests that scandals are "phony," but polls show otherwise, especially when it comes to the Internal Revenue Service. And, of course, the scandals would end more quickly if he ever came clean, disgorged all the information at the beginning and stuck to one story.

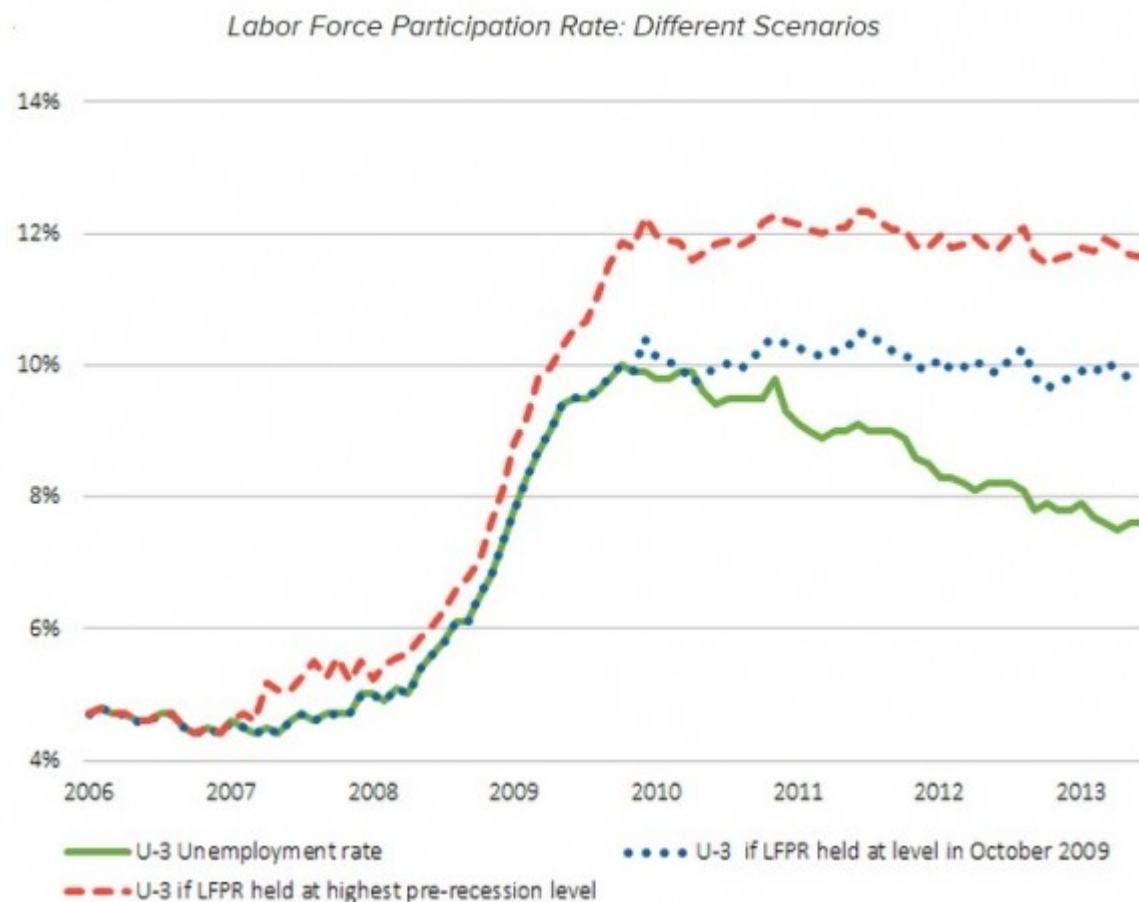
The Obama routine gets tiresome after five years. It seems not to dawn on him that his opponents don't think his policy recommendations (new taxes, Obamacare) are good for the country. And the country on many issues agrees with them. To protest the Obama agenda is to cause "gridlock" and "play politics," in his view.

One can imagine that the trio of speeches is intended to do little more than pump up Obama's troops in advance of the fall budget fights. This has been his approach to governance from the get-go — rile his supporters, denigrate opponents and then complain to the voters. Fatigue with five years of campaigning and shopworn policies is showing, even among his devoted followers, who were hard-pressed to say something nice about the speech. The only question is what he could possibly say in the next two outings that is any different from the hour-plus lecture he delivered on Wednesday.

There is an irony here. The president has assiduously worked to downplay foreign policy and extricate himself and the country from foreign crises, even at the risk of sacrificing our interests and diminishing his credibility. The answer given was that he had to pursue "nation building" at home. But in fact he's accomplished precious little on the domestic front since jamming through his terribly unpopular health-care plan. Maybe he should go back to national security and see if he can leave some positive imprint there. Otherwise both his foreign and domestic policy slates will be barren.

5 horrible job stats Obama failed to mention during his Knox College speech

by James Pethokoukis



Credit: Century Foundation

Listening to President Obama’s speech at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., one might get the impression the US labor market has rebounded with a vengeance: “Today, five years after the start of that Great Recession, America has fought its way back. ... Add it all up, and over the past 40 months, our businesses have created 7.2 million new jobs. This year, we are off to our strongest private-sector job growth since 1999.” And Obama only mentioned “unemployment” a single time.

Sounds like things must be pretty good for US workers, right? But a new report from the [Century Foundation](#) highlights a few job stats that didn’t make it into Obama’s final draft:

- 1. Over 69 percent of the jobs created in Q2 2013 and over 57 percent of all the jobs created in the first half of 2013 were created in the three lowest wage sub-sectors of the economy, Retail Trade, Administrative and Waste Services, and Leisure and Hospitality, that otherwise account for an aggregate of only 33 percent of all private sector jobs.**
- 2. These jobs, in the aggregate, pay an average of only \$15.80 per hour, compared with the other two-thirds of private sector jobs, which pay \$27.16 per hour. Relative to**

unemployment benefits and other assistance, jobs at \$15.80 per hour put less than \$3.00/hour more in the pockets of a newly working consumer.

3. About half of the jobs created during the first half of 2013, and a large majority of the jobs created in Q2 2013, appear to have been part-time jobs that offer employees as little as one hour of work per week, and up to 35 hours of work.

4. After falling from a recession high of 9.2 million to a post-recession low of 7.6 million at the end of Q1 2013, **the number of people saying they are working part time because they can't find full time work (part time for economic reasons) crept back up to 8.2 million, double pre-recession levels.**

5. **Nearly 100 percent of the decline in the U-3 unemployment rate has been the result of there being fewer workers in the labor force as a percentage of the employable population.** If the Labor Force Participation Rate had not fallen from October 2009, when unemployment hit its Great Recession peak of 10 percent, unemployment would today still be around 10 percent. **Moreover, if the LFPR were held constant from its highest pre-recession level of 66.40 percent in January 2007 (when unemployment was 4.6 percent), the U-3 unemployment rate would be nearly 12 percent today.**

Human Events

[Obama hands Republicans an opportunity — and they're already blowing it](#)

by David Harsanyi

Barack Obama isn't pivoting to jobs, he's prepping for battle.

What does a president on perpetual campaign to do when national disapproval rates start rising over 50 percent? [He returns](#) to Knox College in Galesburg, Ill., the site of a Lincoln-Douglas debate, and, even more impressively — as a [near-breathless](#) White House informed us — the place he delivered his first major economic address as a U.S. Senator.

Despite media reports, however, Obama didn't unveil any new plan to "move America forward," and he certainly didn't say anything historic. All he did was flee to safer political ground, hitting themes we've heard for five years running. And why not? Evidence suggests that vacuous economic populism is a political winner these days. No doubt, Republicans have struggled to empathize with the anxieties of struggling middle and working class voters — on home ownership, on secure retirement, and on enhancing social mobility, we hear far too little.

That's not to say that Obama offered a single new constructive idea. Raise the minimum wage? Force banks to lend money easier? Subsidize clean energy? Universal pre-school? "I'm going to challenge CEOs from some of America's best companies to hire more Americans," says our humble leader — because, evidently, CEOs want to stick it to workers for the hell of it. Bold.

Whatever you make of these ideas in general, they are unserious policy prescriptions for a stagnant economy. If the president was earnest about moving forward, he could have offered

something, anything; regulatory slowdown, or reprieve for small businesses, or a pipeline even. Instead, the GOP was presented with a grab bag of progressive hobbyhorses that he knows have no chance of going anywhere. And isn't that the point? Keep your heel on the throat of the obstructionists and win the politics of the day. The House and White House are ready to battle over the debt ceiling and budget and that's what this about.

So what do Republicans do? Obama quipped that repealing Obamacare and cutting spending isn't an economic plan. Well, actually it's as good an economic plan Obama produced. This year, over 830,000 Americans are new part-time workers and 97,000 fewer of them have full-time positions. Poll after poll finds that small business are cutting back or hiring fewer full time workers due to Obamacare. Other polls show Obamacare's popularity decreasing as implementation ratchets up.

Yet, broadly speaking, he's correct; there has to be more. Republicans offer no inspiring alternative. It is incomprehensible that the GOP hasn't devised some palpable and bold 10-step economic plan (with some nifty title like "A Better Bargain") that deals with crony capitalism, government overreach and economic growth. Even before the speech was given, Eric Cantor's office [was touting Republican alternatives](#) to Obama's non-plan. 1 – Urge the Democratic controlled Senate to join the House and Pass a Job Training Bill. 2 – Approve the Keystone Pipeline. 3 – Support the Bipartisan Effort to Expand Offshore Domestic Energy Production.

Seriously? That's it? All fine ideas that won't inspire many voters. Obama says things like "The basic bargain of this country says that if you work hard, you can get ahead — you can build a secure life for your family, and know that your kids will do even better someday" and all Republicans can think of is to demand that the Senate pass a jobs training program? It's quite a feat to be staler than the president, but it seems the GOP is up for the challenge. A free-market economy made that bargain possible, not a government-funded solar panel plant. Most people probably still get it. Obama has presided — and in many ways extended — the worst recovery in American history. He's out of ideas. Republicans aren't going to get a better chance to make their economic case. If they ever bother coming up with one.

WSJ

The Politics of Contempt

Obama pivots for the 973rd time.

by James Taranto

When somebody feels the need to describe his feelings as genuine, it's a safe bet that they're actually insincere. The alternative would be to assume that he is admitting to habitual insincerity--saying, in effect: *Unlike all my other pronouncements, this one is genuine.* But that poses a liar's-paradox problem: A candid acknowledgment that one is habitually insincere would be inconsistent with the underlying reality of habitual insincerity.

Thus pure logic dictates that the Washington Post's [Greg Sargent](#) was merely posturing when he tweeted this morning that he was "genuinely sad to see supposedly neutral news orgs mocking the idea of a 'pivot' to jobs."

Actually, our (admittedly cursory) search turned up only one such org, [ABC News](#), whose website yesterday featured the headline "Obama Pivots to Economy . . . Again." If that seems sarcastic, it is only very mildly so, given that reporter Mary Bruce thoroughly documents the president's perseverance:

February 2009: The president tells Congress "now is the time to jumpstart job creation" and his agenda "begins with jobs."

November 2009: Meeting with his Economic Recovery Advisory Board, the president says his administration "will not rest until we are succeeding in generating the jobs that this economy needs."

April 2010: Obama goes on a "Main Street" tour, saying "it's time to rebuild our economy on a new foundation so that we've got real and sustained growth."

June 2010: The president declares a "Recovery Summer" to highlight the jobs created by stimulus-funded infrastructure projects. "If we want to ensure that Americans can compete with any nation in the world, we're going to have to get serious about our long-term vision for this country and we're going to have to get serious about our infrastructure," he said.

December 2010: The president tells reporters "we are past the crisis point in the economy, but we now have to pivot and focus on jobs and growth."

August 2011: After lawmakers reach a compromise to avert default, the president vows "in the coming months, I'll continue also to fight for what the American people care most about: new jobs, higher wages and faster economic growth."

February 2013: At the start of his second term, the president refocuses on job creation in his State of the Union address, saying "a growing economy that creates good, middle-class jobs--that must be the North Star that guides our efforts."

May 2013: Kicking off his "Jobs and Opportunity Tour," the president says "all of us have to commit ourselves to doing better than we're doing now. And all of us have to rally around the single-greatest challenge that we face as a country right now, and that's reigniting the true engine of economic growth, a rising, thriving middle class."

[Obama's speech](#) was a dreadful, cliché-ridden piece of writing. Here's our favorite bit: "Rather than reduce our deficits with a scalpel--by cutting programs we don't need, fixing ones we do, and making government more efficient--this same group has insisted on leaving in place a meat cleaver called the sequester that has cost jobs, harmed growth, hurt our military, and gutted investments in American education and scientific and medical research that we need to make this country a magnet for good jobs."

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"With an endless parade of distractions, political posturing and phony scandals, Washington has taken its eye off the ball," the president harrumphed. There's an image for you. Where exactly is the ball relative to the parade route?

Also, which scandals exactly are "phony"? The biggest scandal is the one that [raises serious questions](#) about the legitimacy of Obama's re-election. Here is what President Asterisk himself had to say on the subject way back on May 13: "If you've got the IRS operating in anything less than a neutral and non-partisan way, then that is outrageous, it is contrary to our traditions. And

people have to be held accountable, and it's got to be fixed. . . . I've got no patience with it. I will not tolerate it."

We're sure his outrage over the phony scandal was *genuine*.

More from today's speech: "Now, if a good job and a good education have always been key stepping stones into the middle class, a home of your own has been the clearest expression of middle-class security. . . . Finally, as we work to strengthen these cornerstones of middle-class security, I'm going to make the case for why we need to rebuild ladders of opportunity for all those Americans still trapped in poverty."

Which are they, cornerstones or stepping stones? And how do you rebuild a cornerstone anyway? A colleague remarks that "a cornerstone is just a rock," though perhaps he's taking it for granite.

For all the president's talk about equality, he seems to have very rigid ideas about class distinctions. Strengthened cornerstones are only for the middle class. Poor people are stuck with rebuilt ladders. What a grim and dour view of America this president has. In real life, even slum housing generally has staircases or elevators.

Then there's this: "We've got more than 100,000 bridges that are old enough to qualify for Medicare." If bridges are enrolling in Medicare, it's no wonder health-care costs keep rising.

The best summary of Obama's speech came from Obama himself, in a Monday night preview speech to Organizing for Action, the 501(c)(4) "social welfare" group that [rents out the president](#) for \$500,000. (Just think how many ladders you could rebuild with that kind of cash!) Here's what he had to say:

And I'm going to talk about where we need to go from here; how we need to put behind us the distractions and the phony debate and nonsense that somehow passes for politics these days, and get back to basics, refocus on what it is that everybody is talking about around the kitchen table, what people are talking about day to day with their families.

That bit about getting "back to basics"? He didn't mean it. From today's speech: "Of course, we'll keep pressing on other key priorities, like reducing gun violence, rebalancing our fight against al Qaeda, combating climate change, and standing up for civil rights and women's rights."

On the other hand, Obama's certitude about his own superiority, his utter contempt for his political adversaries, even for those whose priorities differ from his--now *that's* genuine. It is the central feature of his political character, and the proximate cause of--pardon the cliché--Washington's current "dysfunction."

But he didn't build that--which is to say that to understand him, you have to understand the subculture of which he is a product. He is what he is because he has been molded by contemporary left-liberalism. His [Manichaeian worldview](#) is reinforced every day by media apparatchiks like Sargent and his Washington Post colleague, [Matt Miller](#), who offers this "analysis" of ObamaCare:

At bottom, Obamacare is a moral assertion that it is wrong when a wealthy nation has 50 million people without health insurance, when medical bills are a leading cause of bankruptcy for families and when millions of luckless souls are unable to get coverage because they have preexisting conditions. The House GOP today says these are not real problems.

See how that works? ObamaCare isn't a law at all, it's something better: a "moral assertion." If you oppose ObamaCare, you disagree with that assertion, and that makes you a bad person.

As [Tore Kjeilen](#) has explained: "Central in the Manichaeian teaching was dualism, that the world itself, and all creatures, was part of a battle between the good, represented by God, and the bad, the darkness, represented by a power driven by envy and lust."

What an apt summary of Obama's and Miller's view of the Democrats and Republicans, respectively. Miller concludes on this hopeful note: "If you think America needs to aim much higher, 2016 is the next great chance. We need a wave election that wins back the House for Democrats after a breakthrough campaign that durably changes public attitudes about the big things the country needs to do next."

Because that worked out so well in 2008.

Pajamas Media

[President Alinsky Threatens Americans with Rising 'Social Tensions'](#)

by J. Christian Adams

You can take the community organizer out of the South Side, but you can't take the community organizer out of the community organizer.

Today, America heard [threats](#) from the increasingly predictable President Alinsky.

"The position of the middle class will erode further," Mr. Obama said. "Inequality will continue to increase, money's power will distort our politics even more. Social tensions will rise, as various groups fight to hold on to what they have, start blaming somebody else for why their position isn't improving. That's not the America we know."

This is standard-fare *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx. Obama doesn't even attempt to disguise it, leaving out only the original author's name. Obama merely adds the threat of social tensions.

For that, thank speech co-author Saul Alinsky.

Alinsky saw social tensions as a necessary circumstance to effective community organizing. Without anger, without the have-nots blaming the haves, it is harder to accumulate power. Alinsky considered the creation of social tensions, or the exploitation of them, as essential to move wealth and power from those who have it to those who don't.

Once "social tensions" are stoked, all that is left is the tactical organization.

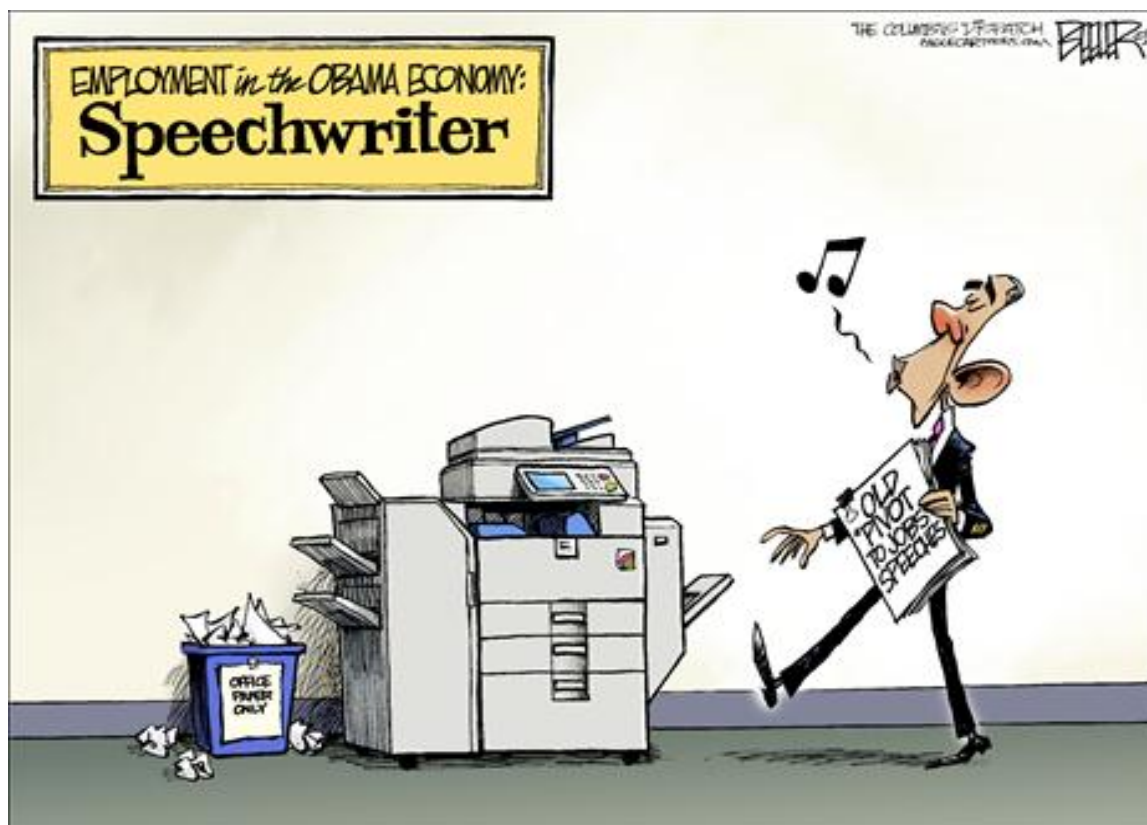
Compare how conversant President Obama is in the ominous language of the economically illiterate left with President Reagan's faith in the economic power of American freedom. Obama's economic worldview flows from Marx and Alinsky, when the free-market oxygen of Reagan is so badly needed. Instead of uplifting Americans, Obama threatens them.

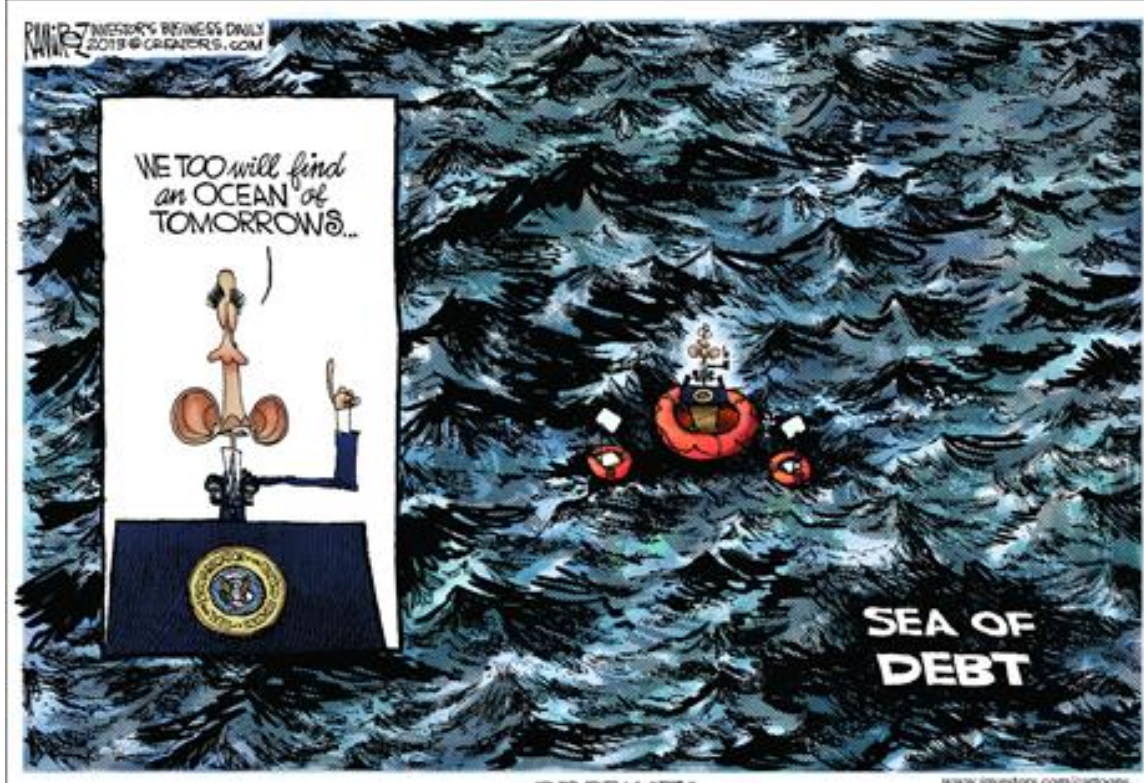
Republicans must match Obama's dark vision with something equally aggressive and directly confrontational. One idea? Defund Obamacare instead of another in a series of phony House votes to repeal it.

The Founders gave the House the power of the purse for times like these. Defund Obamacare and watch the economy accelerate overnight.

Unfortunately for now, it seems some in the GOP don't understand their opponent. Speaker John Boehner gravely misunderstands the situation if he truly believes Obama's address was devoid of content — a mere "Easter egg with no candy in it."

There was plenty of content in that speech, if you know what to listen for. Boehner's response might have worked during more civil times. But with soaring debt and a new muscular federal government, sweet quips don't cut it.





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