

January 5, 2014

Roger Simon posts on the ludicrous de Blasio inauguration.

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These days, when everybody's insurance agent or accountant drives around in a Mercedes because interest rates are so low and why not, when it comes to true conspicuous consumption, when it comes to really being the true modern plutocrats, the Democrats are now the party of the rich — Sheldon Adelson excepted, of course.

So when I watched the broadcast of the inauguration of New York City's new mayor Bill de Blasio with all the talk of income equality and two New Yorks blablabla, all I could do is snort — that is after checking out the cut of the expensive topcoats on De Blasio and Bill Clinton. Good schmeck, I believe they used to call it in the Garment District.

But whatever they called it, the entire event, including Harry Belafonte's comments straight out of the Third International, smacked or schmecked of high comedy. Income inequality — my fat fanny! These guys (and girls) can't be serious. ...

Similar thoughts from Seth Mandel.

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A majority of black and Hispanic New Yorkers believe race relations in their city are "generally good." Yet the chaplain who gave yesterday's invocation claimed the city was a "plantation." New York has seen a steady drop in the murder rate—to historic lows, in fact—for over a decade at the same time as its incarceration rate has plummeted. Yet de Blasio's inauguration featured a speech by Harry Belafonte in which the crowd was treated to his false depiction of the city: "While it is encouraging to know that the statistics have indicated a recent drop in our city's murder rate, New York alarmingly plays a tragic role in the fact that our nation has the largest prison population in the world."

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City Journal has more.

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Except perhaps for this: if nothing else, New Yorkers got a glimpse of how leaders of the de Blasio coalition really think. By and large, they are new to the big tent; before de Blasio's ascension, nobody cared what they thought about anything, and so it never occurred to them to hold their tongues. Certainly they didn't Wednesday, and the new mayor's implicit acceptance of the ugliness was sad and ominous. The speakers represent a large part of the de Blasio base, and his refusal to admonish them sent an unhappy message of its own: stand by for more. ...

John Fund says even the NY Times had trouble stomaching the leftist blech.

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And a card carrying left media type, Peter Beinart says all this is making the Dems the party of John Edwards. It's quite something when someone like Beinart is making fun of these folks.

In his inaugural address Wednesday, incoming New York Mayor Bill de Blasio tried to establish an intellectual pedigree for his focus on economic inequality. He invoked Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Franklin Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Al Smith, Frances Perkins, Fiorello La Guardia, Jacob Riis, David Dinkins, Mario Cuomo, and Harry Belafonte. It reminded me of when Democrats, eager to prove their national-security bona fides, tell audiences they hail from the

party of Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy. As if there wasn't some other Democrat after Kennedy who dabbled at war and peace, some guy from Texas.

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... Now, of course, in the wake of Occupy Wall Street, Elizabeth Warren, and Pope Francis, economic inequality has become motherhood and apple pie for Democrats. Obama will [reportedly](#) make it a centerpiece of his final years in office. Meanwhile, John Edwards, having endured more public disgrace than any recent American politician not named Anthony Weiner, has launched a small plaintiff's law firm in Raleigh, North Carolina. He [recently told](#) The News & Observer that he hopes "to give regular people who have been treated unfairly a chance against really powerful opponents and well-funded opponents." Some things never change.

[Jennifer Rubin](#) has 2014 predictions.

There will be no final deal with Iran in six months.

Sen. Max Baucus's early retirement will not secure his Montana Senate seat for Democrats.

Republicans will win a Senate seat in either New Hampshire, Iowa or Michigan.

Republican governors in Florida and Pennsylvania will lose reelection bids.

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The cartoonists have fun with the globalony touring ship stuck in Antarctic ice. The [US Coast Guard](#) is sending the [Polar Star](#) to break the two ships out.

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The US Coast Guard has accepted this request and will make Polar Star available to assist.

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Roger L. Simon

[The Party of the Rich Flogs Income Inequality](#)

Back when I was a kid, I used to think Republicans were the party of the rich — white guys who belonged to country clubs and drove Fleetwoods. Of course, that was long before I heard of the likes of George Soros, Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, Steve Jobs and Larry Ellison — white guys who fly Gulf Streams and have mansions in Gstaad. (Well, Buffett lives a little more circumspectly.) Or went to work in Hollywood, land of Jeff Katzenberg, David Geffen, Oprah Winfrey, etc. There's rich and then there's REALLY RICH, if you know what I mean. And a fair number, maybe the majority, of the latter are Democrats and profess to be liberals or progressives or something. (And there's Fidel Castro, who is evidently a billionaire, and professes to be a communist.)

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But whatever they called it, the entire event, including Harry Belafonte's comments straight out of the Third International, smacked or schmecked of high comedy. Income inequality — my fat fanny! These guys (and girls) can't be serious. They were probably all busy checking their smart phones to see how the market was doing (not good that day). As for the poor, it doesn't matter what happens to them as long as the rhetoric is good and they keep voting Democratic.

And that's so obviously the point it's amazing the de Blasios can still pronounce the drivel with a straight face. Liberal social programs have failed consistently year in and year out since they went on steroids during Lyndon Johnson's Great Society. But those programs, that kind of government spending, is all they have in their playbook. It never worked before. Why is it going to work now?

Funnily enough, de Blasio is spewing this tired bilge at the very moment pollsters tell us the American people are fed up with big government as never before. Fully 70% of our citizens apparently want smaller government. And wait until they have another year of Obamacare to mull over.

So who are these people, these *soi-disant* progressives who keep flogging this swill? They are quite obviously the people who profit most from it in a variety of ways. Well, I'll tell you, since I was once one of them.

They are the “Soros Socialists,” successful people who want to stay rich and powerful. They do this by espousing social programs and making pronouncements, few of which affect them even minimally. But they have the image of being generous egalitarians and the image is all. It prevents them (their power and greed) from being scrutinized by others — and even more importantly it can prevent them from scrutinizing themselves.

Contentions

Bill de Blasio’s Mandate

by Seth Mandel

While it’s tempting for politicians to interpret an election victory as a mandate that aligns with their personal priorities over those of the electorate, the disconnect is especially glaring in the case of Bill de Blasio. The new mayor of New York City was sworn in yesterday in a downright bizarre spectacle. During a procession of speeches, the New York City of 2013-14 was notably absent to make room for the New York City of the progressives’ fevered imaginations, completely at odds with how New Yorkers generally view their home.

A majority of black and Hispanic New Yorkers believe race relations in their city are “[generally good](#).” Yet the chaplain who gave yesterday’s invocation claimed the city was a “[plantation](#).” New York has seen a [steady drop](#) in the murder rate—to historic lows, in fact—for over a decade at the same time as its incarceration rate has [plummeted](#). Yet de Blasio’s inauguration featured a speech by Harry Belafonte in which the crowd was treated to his false [depiction](#) of the city: “While it is encouraging to know that the statistics have indicated a recent drop in our city’s murder rate, New York alarmingly plays a tragic role in the fact that our nation has the largest prison population in the world.”

But demonstrably false progressive propaganda on race and crime are just the opening acts. The main event, of course, is income inequality. This is a Progressive Moment, we are told, thanks to the victory of de Blasio and others, such as the election of an avowed socialist to Seattle’s city council advocating policies she [acknowledged will cost jobs](#)—but hey, revolutions are messy. And this Progressive Moment was made possible, as the *New York Times* [explains](#), by frustration with “the city’s current gilded era” which “propelled” de Blasio to power. Except, of course, that this is a fantasy.

Back to the polling on New Yorkers’ attitudes toward their city: a majority say the economic condition of the city is good, and closing the income gap between rich and poor [rated](#) the lowest of four voter priorities even at the height of the de Blasio campaign. How do these numbers square with de Blasio’s landslide victory? Perfectly, as a matter of fact.

De Blasio was practically handed the mayoralty after winning the Democratic nomination and never looking back. But the primaries garnered 20 percent turnout. As the *New York Times* [explained](#), this means de Blasio’s initial victory was bestowed on him by “about 3 percent of all New Yorkers.” The *Times* also [reported](#) that turnout in the general election was a record low of 24 percent—noticeably lower, even, than the turnout for Michael Bloomberg’s election to a third term.

This also casts some light on the question of what kind of national momentum this Progressive Moment has. New York is a liberal city. Seattle is a liberal city. It's certainly notable that de Blasio is the first registered Democrat elected to lead New York in two decades, but it's not as though statist excesses were rare in the Bloomberg administration—and, let us not forget, Bloomberg was a former registered Democrat who changed his registration in order to avoid a Democratic primary and then dropped his Republican registration while in office.

Some, such as reporters at Politico, suggest the local progressives may elevate the conversation to the national level. The outlet has a [story](#) about the crucial relationships de Blasio will have to manage, and President Obama is at the top of the list:

De Blasio's going to want attention from the federal government that Obama probably won't be able to give, and Obama's going to be pressured to respond more fully to the kind of progressive politics that de Blasio represents.

Will he, though? Will the leftwing mayor of New York put pressure on a second-term president to follow his lead? Anything more than lip service is highly doubtful, and class warfare rhetoric was part of the president's speeches before most people outside New York knew much about de Blasio. You could argue, in fact, the opposite: Americans on the whole seem more concerned about inequality than New Yorkers. But then you'd have to contend with the fact that for five years Obama has been pushing inequality as a stain on the national conscience and his approval ratings have been in a nosedive.

In that way and in others, the president offers de Blasio a cautionary tale. Obama was elected in the midst of an economic crisis, and he chose to push for an unpopular health-care reform bill despite the fact that health care was [not a top priority](#) for voters in 2008 and at the time Americans [favored](#) keeping the current health-care system. The lesson for de Blasio is how easily an administration can be knocked off-course if public opinion is discarded as soon as the sun sets on Election Day.

City Journal

[Irony and Oafishness on Inauguration Day](#)

The de Blasio era kicks off with bitter denunciations and fantastical ramblings.

by Bob McManus

Ahistorical anger and slow-witted oafishness were front and center on the steps of City Hall New Year's Day, as Mayor Bill de Blasio took his ceremonial oath of office. There was significant irony, too, even if it wasn't quite so obvious.

Harry Belafonte's bitterness; a black pastor's fantastical ramblings on race relations; Public Advocate Letitia James's embarrassing presentation of [Dasani Coates](#), the 11-year-old homeless child from Brooklyn; the seething dismissal of Mike Bloomberg and his real accomplishments—they're all part of the Inauguration Day record now, and there's not much new to be said about them.

Except perhaps for this: if nothing else, New Yorkers got a glimpse of how leaders of the de Blasio coalition really think. By and large, they are new to the big tent; before de Blasio's ascension, nobody cared what they thought about anything, and so it never occurred to them to hold their tongues. Certainly they didn't Wednesday, and the new mayor's implicit acceptance of the ugliness was sad and ominous. The speakers represent a large part of the de Blasio base, and his refusal to admonish them sent an unhappy message of its own: stand by for more.

Not to be caught up in the amateur-hour antics, however, was former president Bill Clinton. He cheerfully administered the oath of office to de Blasio—and that's where the irony comes in. For wasn't Clinton the architect of welfare reform as we know it, a largely successful effort to crack the cycle of dependence that owned the souls of so many Americans? And isn't de Blasio more or less dedicated to dragging New York back to the days of no-questions-asked, no-stigmas-attached, multi-generational addiction to government dollars?

The Clinton-era reforms were embraced enthusiastically—on New York terms, anyway—by then-governor George Pataki and mayors Giuliani and Bloomberg. The fundamental assumptions of public assistance were reordered; time limits were imposed, as were real work requirements. And stringent eligibility standards were established and enforced. The results? A dramatic drop in social-services caseloads and dynamic welfare-to-work progress, as thousands entered the economy—many for the first time. It would be fanciful to suppose that they all went willingly, and of course not all succeeded. And of those that did, many remain on the cusp of return; they know the pride of self-sufficiency, but that can be cold comfort compared with the rigors of earning a living in an economically unforgiving city. And none of this takes into account the untallied thousands who have never been dependent on government to make ends meet, even though their circumstances are only marginally different from those who have managed to work their way off the rolls.

The progressives think that both sorts are chumps, of course, because progressives don't really understand those who strive to better themselves and their children. Nor do they respect their struggle for self-reliance. For progressives, more government is always the answer.

Which explains the utility to them of Dasani Coates, who had a starring role Wednesday, both literally and symbolically. Public Advocate James presented Dasani to the inaugural assembly as a victim of the Bloomberg administration's callous indifference, the face of the city's income-inequality crisis.

She is neither, of course, the *New York Times's* epic profile of her notwithstanding. She's a victim, all right—not of municipal indifference, but of the enduring drug addiction and related failings of the two adults in her life. The culprit is not a lack of tax revenue—New York City will spend close to \$1 billion on the homeless this year—and most certainly not welfare reform. The city's welfare caseload has dropped by some two-thirds since 1996, from more than 1 million to 340,000. While that embodies many more success stories than failures, it also represents a distillation process—the truly hard cases leave last, and some never leave at all. (Number Dasani's parents among the latter.)

This isn't to suggest that the city has no obligation to Dasani, one of 22,000 homeless children in the five boroughs. Each case presents a unique challenge, and each needs to be engaged individually. But horror stories like Dasani's don't represent sufficient cause to roll back or even seriously question welfare reform.

When Letitia James falsely declared herself Dasani's savior on Inauguration Day, it was to establish her own place on the municipal stage, not to help the child in any meaningful way. That would require doing something about the nearly criminally negligent adults at the center of the case; James had not a word for them. Her silence was a profound insult to thousands of New York parents who labor bravely to raise their children with dignity and self-respect.

As for de Blasio, he's committed to the politics of "income inequality"—or, rather, unfocused income redistribution—as was virtually everybody else present at City Hall Wednesday, but for Bill Clinton. How ironic it would be if such a singular achievement of Clinton's presidency begins to unravel in the hands of a man the former president swore into office. For New York, irony would be the least of it.

Bob McManus is an adjunct fellow of the Manhattan Institute, specializing in New York politics, policy, and public life. He was formerly editorial page editor of the New York Post, and he resides in Manhattan.

National Review

[When Even the New York Times . . .](#)

by John Fund

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The *Times* couldn't conclude without expressing the hope that because "progressive values run deep in this city" that Mayor de Blasio will "give a voice to the voiceless (and) ease the suffering of the poor." But it's clearly worried that — from the evidence of his rabble-rousing inauguration — some of his more bizarre allies will get in the way of his ability to govern and make it more difficult to turn New York into a showcase for a "New Progressivism."

The Atlantic

Democrats in 2014: The Party of John Edwards

The North Carolinian laid the groundwork for Bill de Blasio's mayoral run and Barack Obama's 2014 agenda, but don't expect his name to come up.

by Peter Beinart



In his [inaugural address Wednesday](#), incoming New York Mayor Bill de Blasio tried to establish an intellectual pedigree for his focus on economic inequality. He invoked Bill Clinton, Hillary Clinton, Franklin Roosevelt, Eleanor Roosevelt, Al Smith, Frances Perkins, Fiorello La Guardia, Jacob Riis, David Dinkins, Mario Cuomo, and Harry Belafonte. It reminded me of when Democrats, eager to prove their national-security bona fides, tell audiences they hail from the party of Roosevelt, Truman, and Kennedy. As if there wasn't some other Democrat after Kennedy who dabbled at war and peace, some guy from Texas.

De Blasio's speech was a bit like that. He left out the politician who more than any other kindled the Democrats' renewed interest in economic inequality because that politician has been airbrushed from Democratic Party history. His name is John Edwards.

Edwards, of course, was not the first national politician to decry the gap between rich and poor. As Garance Franke-Ruta [noted last September](#), de Blasio's "two cities" theme echoes Mario Cuomo's 1984 Democratic convention keynote and, almost a century before that, William Jennings Bryan's legendary "Cross of Gold" speech. But after Cuomo, the balance of power inside the Democratic Party [shifted toward New Democratic politicians](#) like Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Evan Bayh, and Chuck Robb and centrist strategists like Mark Penn and Bruce Reed, who generally avoided the language of class and instead focused on proving that Democrats could foster economic growth.

It was Edwards, during his 2004 presidential run, who returned the focus to inequality by flipping Clintonism on its head. In his 1992 campaign, Clinton had talked a lot about "rewarding work." Democrats, he insisted, would help people who "played by the rules"—for instance, via an

expanded earned income tax credit for the working poor—but they would stop coddling welfare recipients. In 2004, Edwards took that judgmental tone but redirected it. In his narrative, the people disrespecting work were not welfare mothers but trust funders, people who lived off their investments rather than the sweat of their brow.

“President Bush has a war on work,” [Edwards declared when he announced for president](#). “You see it in everything he does. He wants to eliminate every penny of tax on wealth, and shift the whole burden to people who work for a living. So people won't pay any taxes at all when they make money from selling stocks, when they get big dividends every year, or when they inherit a massive estate. But if you work at a restaurant earning the minimum wage—you'll pay more.”

In Obama's 2004 convention speech, he spoke famously about overcoming America's cultural and ideological divide. It was Edwards who depicted an America divided by class.

From this new moralism—directed not against the undeserving poor but the undeserving rich—Edwards built the “Two Americas” theme that dominated his campaign. In Barack Obama's [2004 convention speech](#), he spoke famously about overcoming America's cultural and ideological divide: “There's not a liberal America and a conservative America ... There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America ... We worship an awesome God in the blue states, and we don't like federal agents poking around our libraries in the red states.” Democratic nominee [John Kerry did too](#). (“Some just see us divided into those red states and blue states, but I see us as one America: red, white and blue.”) It was Edwards who [depicted](#) an America divided by class, with “two different economies ... one for people who are set for life ... and then one for most Americans, people who live paycheck to paycheck.

In the run-up to his 2008 presidential bid, Edwards became even edgier. At a time when poverty was considered an issue of marginal political utility, Edwards set up a research center on poverty at the University of North Carolina. He [spent the summer of 2007](#) on an eight-state poverty tour meant to echo Robert Kennedy's trip through Appalachia in 1968. He officially [launched](#) his campaign from New Orleans' desperately poor, hurricane-ravaged Ninth Ward. At campaign stops, he [sometimes brought on stage](#) a man unable to speak for most of his life because he lacked the health coverage to fix his cleft palate.

Under pressure from Edwards, Obama in 2007 went to [Washington's Anacostia neighborhood](#) to unveil a series of anti-poverty proposals and, in an anti-Edwards jab, declared that, “This kind of poverty is not an issue I just discovered for the purposes of a campaign. It is the cause that led me to a life of public service almost 25 years ago.” But neither poverty nor class unfairness enjoyed the prominence in Obama's campaign that it did in Edwards'. Indeed, Obama never uttered the words “inequality” or “unequal” in [his 2008 convention speech](#). And while Obama used Mitt Romney's wealth against him in 2012, he [rarely discussed poverty](#) on the stump.

Now, of course, in the wake of Occupy Wall Street, Elizabeth Warren, and Pope Francis, economic inequality has become motherhood and apple pie for Democrats. Obama will [reportedly](#) make it a centerpiece of his final years in office. Meanwhile, John Edwards, having endured more public disgrace than any recent American politician not named Anthony Weiner, has launched a small plaintiff's law firm in Raleigh, North Carolina. He [recently told](#) *The News & Observer* that he hopes “to give regular people who have been treated unfairly a chance against really powerful opponents and well-funded opponents.” Some things never change.

Right Turn

Predictions for 2014

by Jennifer Rubin

There will be no final deal with Iran in six months.

Sen. Max Baucus's early retirement will not secure his Montana Senate seat for Democrats.

Republicans will win a Senate seat in either New Hampshire, Iowa or Michigan.

Republican governors in Florida and Pennsylvania will lose reelection bids.

Some senior Democrat will come in to rescue John Podesta, who came in to rescue the flagging administration.

One top national security official will not be there at the end of 2014.

The president's State of the Union address will be too long, partisan and boring, prompting calls to go back to submitting the SOTU in writing only.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry will begin his run for president again. Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush will not.

Ukraine's autocratic president will not be in power at the end of 2014; the Egyptian military will be.

Bill Clinton will work to distance Hillary from Obama's Middle East flubs.

More judges, including key federal circuit courts, will rule against the Obamacare birth control mandate.

By the end of 2014, [more than 20 states will recognize gay marriage](#).

The [Caroline Kennedy](#) buzz will build.

The president's end-of-year 2014 press conference will be gloomier than this one.

Australian Maritime Safety Authority

US Coast Guard ice breaker to assist ships beset in ice in Antarctica

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority's Rescue Coordination Centre (RCC Australia) has requested the US Coast Guard's Polar Star icebreaker to assist the vessels MV Akademik Shokalskiy and Xue Long which are beset by ice in Commonwealth Bay.

The US Coast Guard has accepted this request and will make Polar Star available to assist.

The Polar Star has been en route to Antarctica since 3 December, 2013 – weeks prior to the MV Akademik Shokalskiy being beset by ice in Commonwealth Bay. The intended mission of the Polar Star is to clear a navigable shipping channel in McMurdo Sound to the National Science Foundation's Scientific Research Station. Resupply ships use the channel to bring food, fuel and other goods to the station. The Polar Star will go on to undertake its mission once the search and rescue incident is resolved.

RCC Australia identified the Polar Star as a vessel capable of assisting the beset vessels following MV Akademik Shokalskiy being beset by ice overnight on 24 December, 2013. RCC Australia has been in discussion with the US Coast Guard this week to ascertain if the Polar Star was able to assist once it reaches Antarctica.

The request for the Polar Star to assist the beset vessels was made by RCC Australia to the US Coast Guard on 3 January, 2014. The US Coast Guard officially accepted this request and released the Polar Star to RCC Australia for search and rescue tasking at 8.30am on 4 January, 2014.

The Polar Star will leave Sydney today after taking on supplies prior to its voyage to Antarctica.

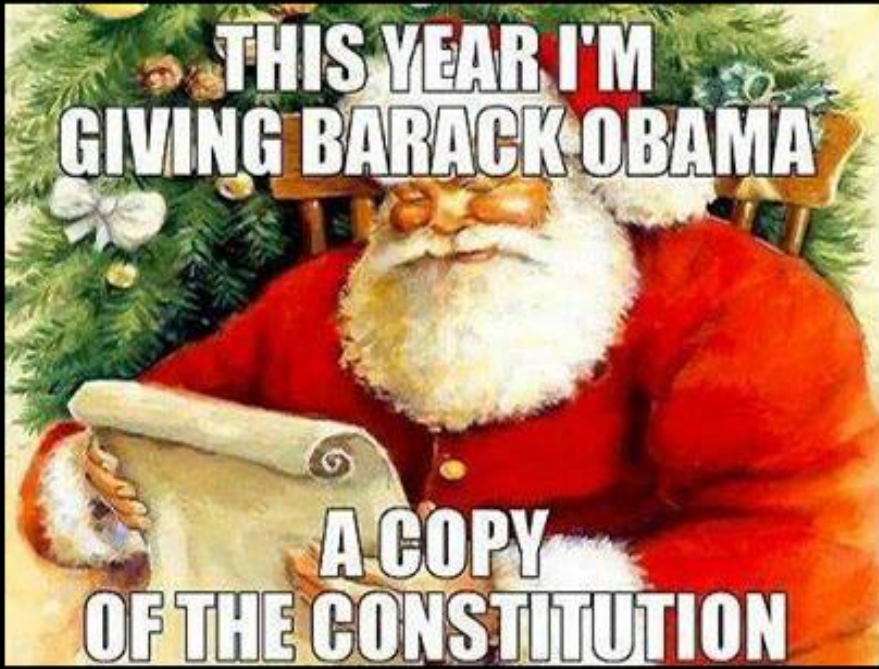
It is anticipated it will take approximately seven (7) days for the Polar Star to reach Commonwealth Bay, dependent on weather and ice conditions.

At 122 metres, the Polar Star is one of the largest ships in the US Coast Guard fleet. It has a range of 16,000 nautical miles at 18 knots. The Polar Star has a crew of 140 people. The Polar Star is able to continuously break ice up to 1.8 metres (6ft) while travelling at three (3) knots and can break ice over six (21ft) metres thick.

RCC Australia will be in regular contact with the relevant US Coast Guard RCC at Alameda, California, and the Captain of the Polar Star during its journey to Antarctica

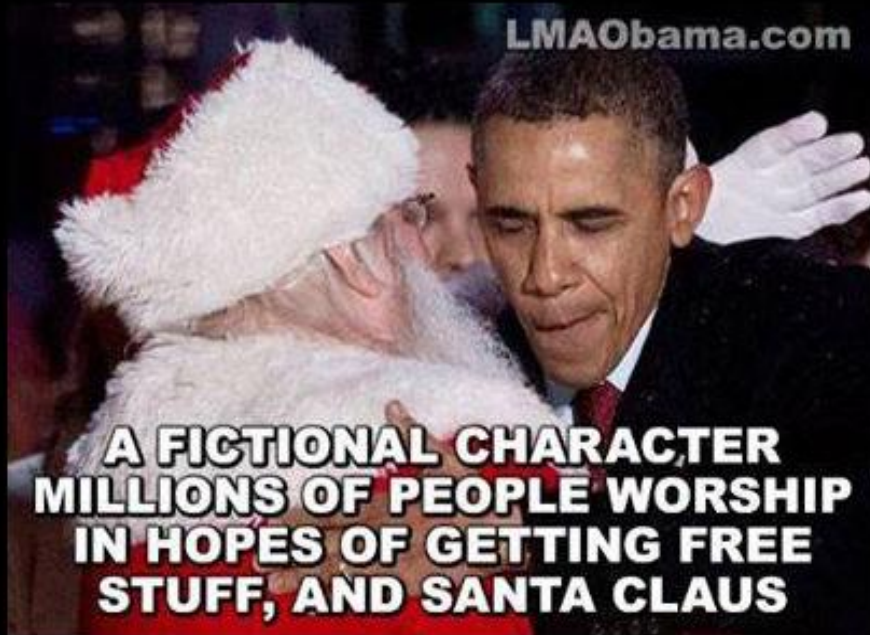


BREAKING NEWS: OBAMA HAS PAINFUL ENCOUNTER WITH POLL*



“All I want
for Christmas
Is a new
President”

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**A FICTIONAL CHARACTER
MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WORSHIP
IN HOPES OF GETTING FREE
STUFF, AND SANTA CLAUS**



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UPDATE ON THAT RESEARCH SHIP, FROZEN IN ANTARTIC ICE



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**You get your ship trapped in ice
that you denied was there.**



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