

In secret Goldman Sachs speeches, Clinton explains why the rich should rule

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17 October 2016

In one question-and-answer session on October 24, 2013 at Goldman Sachs, with CEO Lloyd Blankfein in attendance, an audience member asked the current Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton the following question: “And Mike Bloomberg had 30 billion other reasons than to take office. Do we need a wholesale change in Washington that has more to do with people that don’t need the job than have the job?”

Clinton’s answer was revealing. “That’s a really interesting question,” she said. “You know, I would like to see more successful business people run for office. I really would like to see that because I do think, you know, you don’t have to have 30 billion, but you have a certain level of freedom. And there’s that memorable phrase from a former member of the Senate: You can be maybe rented, but never bought. And I think it’s important to have people with those experiences.”

Clinton’s response is an open defense of the aristocratic principle: the rich should rule. By virtue of being very wealthy, the rich have the leisure time to pursue a political career. Moreover, they supposedly have immunity from being bribed, since they are already so wealthy. Finally, they have the “experience in business” necessary to preside over a social system that benefits the social layer which appropriates all the profits from business and finance. These are sentiments that any 18th or 19th century aristocrat would recognize and embrace.

Clinton merely echoes, in a more crude form, the patrician arrogance of Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3rd Marquess of Salisbury (1830-1903), whose views were summed up by historian Barbara Tuchman:

He did not believe in political equality. There was the multitude, he said, and there were the “natural” leaders. “Always wealth, in some countries birth, and in all countries intellectual power and culture mark out the man to whom, in a healthy state of feeling, a community looks to undertake its government.” These men had the leisure for it and the fortune, “so that the struggles for ambition are not defiled by the taint of sordid greed... They are the aristocracy of a country in the original and best sense of the word... The important point is that the rulers of a country should be taken from among them,” and as a class they should retain that “political preponderance to which they have every right that superior fitness can confer.”

Clinton’s argument that her own wealth entitles her to govern

America is an argument also made repeatedly by Donald Trump, who touts his own billions as a reason he will remain immune to “special interests.”

The “former member of the Senate” to whom Clinton was apparently referring was John Breaux, a Louisiana Democrat who held office from 1987 to 2005. Considered one of the most conservative Democrats ever to take office, Clinton’s role model went on to pursue a lucrative lobbying career at the firm Squire Patton Boggs. His name is synonymous with Washington’s corrupt “revolving door.”

On Saturday, WikiLeaks published the transcripts of three lavishly paid speeches given by Clinton at gatherings held by Goldman Sachs, dating from June 4, October 24 and October 29, 2013. All three feature a mix of groveling before the financial malefactors who hired her to speak and gloating over her own wealth.

In one of her secret Wall Street speeches, Clinton frankly admitted that she has a “public position” and a “private position.” The private position is expressed in “backroom discussions,” while the “public position” consists of the lies she tells to the rest of the population.

The fact that Clinton addressed the notorious investment bank in the first place highlights the extent to which the American corporate, financial and political establishment is drenched in corruption and criminality. In April 2011, the Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations released a report entitled “Wall Street and the Financial Crisis: Anatomy of a Financial Collapse.” This report exhaustively documented that the financial crash of 2008 and the recession that followed were the product of fraud and illegality on the part of mortgage lenders and banks such as Goldman Sachs, with government regulatory bodies as well as credit rating agencies serving as accessories.

Forty percent of the 639-page report, or some 240 pages, were devoted to the fraudulent and deceptive practices of Goldman Sachs. The report presented documents, emails, internal communications and other evidence showing that the largest US investment bank had sold billions of dollars in subprime mortgage-backed securities to investors, vouching for their value, even as it was betting that the investments would fail. Goldman made billions and CEO Blankfein and other top executives pocketed millions in bonuses by accelerating the collapse of the financial system.

Michigan Senator Carl Levin, the chairman of the Senate subcommittee, famously described how the investigation had uncovered “a financial snake pit rife with greed, conflicts of interest and wrongdoing.”

“Using their own words in documents subpoenaed by the subcommittee,” Levin said, “the report discloses how financial firms deliberately took advantage of their clients and investors, how credit

rating agencies assigned AAA ratings to high-risk securities, and how regulators sat on their hands instead of reining in the unsafe and unsound practices all around them. Rampant conflicts of interest are the threads that run through every chapter of this sordid story.”

So when Clinton was hobnobbing with Goldman Sachs CEO Blankfein in 2013, while investigations of wrongdoing by Goldman and the other Wall Street banks were still ongoing, she was consorting with a man who belonged in prison. In 2011, Levin had recommended that the Justice Department criminally prosecute Blankfein for his fraudulent and deceptive conduct, and the Senate subcommittee charged that he had perjured himself in testimony in 2010 regarding his bank’s role in the financial crash. Nevertheless, no charges were brought, and in 2013 Clinton was accepting upwards of \$225,000 per speech from Blankfein’s firm.

Hillary and Bill Clinton have accumulated a total of \$153 million in speaking fees since Bill Clinton left the White House. Only the very naive could believe that these vast sums were paid for the speeches themselves. They were payment for services rendered to the American financial aristocracy over a protracted period.

Clinton’s Wall Street speeches deserve to be widely read. They provide an invaluable first-hand education in the sheer cynicism of the American ruling class. While the Obama administration publicly insisted that the Dodd-Frank reforms of 2010 were “strict regulations” that would ensure that the 2008 crash would “never happen again,” Clinton privately told her Goldman audience not to worry, that these cosmetic reforms had to be passed for “political reasons,” to provide the appearance that the government did not “sit idly by and do nothing” as people lost their jobs, homes and life savings.

When Blankfein snidely asked Clinton how, should he decide to run for president, he should conduct his campaign, Clinton responded with her own cynical joke. “I think you would leave Goldman Sachs and start running a soup kitchen somewhere,” Clinton replied, to the merriment of the assembled guests.

The response to the publication of these speeches by so-called “socialist” Bernie Sanders exposes the utterly fraudulent character of his entire presidential bid. While he postured during the Democratic Party primaries as a proponent of a “political revolution” against the “billionaire class,” Sanders now functions shamelessly as a sideshow for the Clinton campaign, browbeating his (now much smaller) audiences with admonitions to vote for the preferred candidate of the “billionaire class” he claimed to oppose.

During his run for the Democratic nomination, Sanders repeatedly called on Clinton to release the transcripts of her Wall Street speeches, which she refused to do. He charged that the speeches would show her subservience to the bankers. Now, transcripts have been leaked to the public, completely substantiating his accusations. His silence only underscores the depth of his political treachery and dishonesty.

Meanwhile, emails published by WikiLeaks to and from Clinton’s campaign chairman, John Podesta, reveal the consummate cynicism with which Hillary Clinton sought to portray herself as a champion of “everyday Americans,” small businesses, unionized workers, minorities and women. Having no connection whatsoever to any popular movement or any policies that have benefited the bottom 90 percent of American society, Clinton relies on a network of “community leaders,” union bureaucrats, academics, celebrities and media “surrogates,” who use empty demagoguery and identity politics to market her brand to voters.

In one particularly Machiavellian email, one of Clinton’s aides discussed adding a “riff” of demagogic statements against Wall Street

in a speech to Deutsche Bank in 2015, “precisely for the purpose of having something we could show people if ever asked what she was saying behind closed doors for two years to all those fat cats.”

“I wrote her a long riff about economic fairness and how the financial industry has lost its way,” the aide wrote. “Perhaps at some point there will be value in sharing this with a reporter and getting a story written. Upside would be that when people say she’s too close to Wall Street and has taken too much money from bankers, we can point to evidence that she wasn’t afraid to speak truth to power.”

In another email, Podesta frankly noted that Clinton hated the phrase “everyday Americans,” but Podesta urged her to use it anyway. “I know she has begun to hate everyday Americans, but I think we should use it once the first time she says I’m running for president because you and everyday Americans need a champion,” Podesta wrote.

The cynicism of Clinton’s campaign knows no bounds. Her staff actually worked to help Donald Trump secure the Republican nomination, believing that Clinton would have a better chance of defeating Trump in the election than a more conventional Republican candidate. The media was encouraged to “take him seriously,” and Clinton was urged to single Trump out for criticism in order to “help him cement his front runner status” among the Republican primary candidates.

Around 11,000 out of 50,000 emails obtained by WikiLeaks have been published. The Clinton campaign’s response to these exposures has been to blame Russia, in line with the Obama administration’s campaign of saber-rattling against the Putin administration. In an interview last weekend on Fox News, Podesta suggested that the emails were not authentic, while simultaneously (and inconsistently) arguing that the emails were acquired by “the Russians,” who are supposedly attempting to deliver the election to Donald Trump.

On Friday, Podesta taunted WikiLeaks editor Julian Assange with a picture of a number of uniformed chefs preparing a luxurious private dinner for the Hillary Victory Fund. “I bet the lobster risotto is better than the food at the Ecuadorian Embassy,” Podesta wrote as the caption to the photograph on Twitter, referring to the fact that Assange has been a de facto prisoner at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London since he sought asylum there in June 2012. Assange immediately replied, “Yes, we get it. The elite eat better than the peasants they abuse.”



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