



Networks Tout Fed Nominee Yellen's 'Brilliance'

By: Sean Long - October 10, 2013

President Obama nominated Janet Yellen, Fed vice chair, to head the Federal Reserve on Oct. 9. If confirmed, she will take on Ben Bernanke's role as chairman and be the first woman in that role. Networks lauded her nomination that evening, after having paid little attention to her liberal policies in recent months.

Broadcast network evening and morning shows were giddy at the nomination of Yellen. Her economic experience, intelligence and "working class roots" were all praised the night of her nomination and the following morning.

Those network news programs spent ten minutes and 25 seconds discussing Yellen, but almost exclusively fawned over her "brilliance" and shared personal details of her life. Criticism of Yellen's background and liberal leanings made up only 29 seconds of that airtime, all of which was on CBS "Evening News" and "This Morning." ABC and NBC failed to mention the potential Fed chairman's critics.

To his credit, CBS anchor Scott Pelley asked about Yellen's critics, which Anthony Mason said worry about her "dovish" and "liberal" leanings. But then Mason undermined that claim saying, "Even those who disagree with her have enormous respect for her."

Yellen is a very liberal candidate. Bob Janjuah, global head of tactical asset allocation at Nomura International PLC, once said of her "if Karl Marx was in charge of the world, he'd have Janet Yellen as his central bank governor."

In a 2013 speech to the AFL-CIO, she praised the controversial Dodd-Frank regulatory overhaul, even suggesting that it does not go far enough. Furthermore, notoriously liberal economist, Paul Krugman, cited Yellen's support of government spending for his criticism of fiscal austerity. She is widely regarded as an extremely dovish candidate, resulting in fear that she would not be attentive enough to the dangers of inflation.

Yet the networks couldn't contain their enthusiasm for Obama's pick. NBC's Rehema Ellis gushed that "for all her brilliance, she is also down to Earth" on "Nightly News." CBS "This Morning" anchor Bob Schieffer declared Yellen an "extraordinary choice" and said "she brings so much talent, so accurate in predictions."

In fact, all three networks praised Yellen's foresight, with CBS' "This Morning" touting a Wall Street Journal study demonstrating Yellen's accurate predictions between 2009 and 2012. But not everyone agrees that assessment of Yellen's record.

ABC's "World News" credited her for "predicting a recession," while another program credited her with seeing the housing bubble coming. Ethan Epstein of the Weekly Standard raised doubts about such portrayals of her "clairvoyance." He called her record "muddled" and concluded that like most other people "She underestimated the risks of the housing bubble and only recognized the terrible truth when it was already much too late."

Mark Calabria, Director of Financial Regulation Studies at the Cato Institute has criticized Yellen for failing to see the Fed's role in the housing bubble. In 2010, Yellen refused to acknowledge that Fed monetary policy influenced the housing bubble or that there was any problem with Fed regulation during that time.

Rather than examining her policies, network news has focused on personal details of her life. On Oct. 9, NBC's "Nightly News" even brought up the stamp collection she had inherited from her mother. That segment had nothing to say about criticism of her policies.

In three months leading up to her confirmation, news programs on ABC, CBS and NBC spent less time on Janet Yellen and the Fed candidacy than they did on Miss America.