

TUESDAY, AUG 10, 2010 08:11 ET

Robert Gibbs attacks the fringe losers of the Left

BY GLENN GREENWALD



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**(updated below - Update II)**

Robert Gibbs, White House press secretary.

You may think that the reason you're dissatisfied with the Obama administration is because of substantive objections to their policies: that they've done so little about **crisis-level unemployment, foreclosures and widespread economic misery**. Or because of the White House's **apparently endless devotion to Wall Street**. Or because the President has escalated a miserable, pointless and unwinnable war that is entering its ninth year. Or because he has claimed the power to **imprison people for life with no**

charges and to **assassinate American citizens without due process, intensified the secrecy weapons and immunity instruments** abused by his predecessor, and found **all new ways of denying habeas corpus**. Or because he granted full-scale legal immunity to those who committed serious crimes in the last administration. Or because he's failed to fulfill -- or affirmatively broken -- promises ranging from **transparency** to gay rights.

But Robert Gibbs -- in **one of the most petulant, self-pitying outbursts seen from a top political official in recent memory**, half derived from a paranoid Richard Nixon rant and the other half from a Sean Hannity/Sarah Palin caricature of The Far Left -- is here to tell you that the **real reason** you're dissatisfied with the President is because you're a fringe, ideological, Leftist extremist ingrate who needs drug counseling:

The White House is simmering with anger at criticism from liberals who say President Obama is more concerned with deal-making than ideological purity.

During an interview with The Hill in his West Wing office, White House press secretary Robert Gibbs blasted liberal naysayers, whom he said would never regard anything the president did as good enough.

"I hear these people saying he's like George Bush. **Those people ought to be drug tested,**" Gibbs said. **"I mean, it's crazy."**

The press secretary dismissed the "professional left" in terms very similar to those used by their opponents on the ideological right, saying, "They will be satisfied when we have Canadian healthcare and we've eliminated the Pentagon. That's not reality."

Of those who complain that Obama caved to centrists on issues such as healthcare reform, Gibbs said: "They wouldn't be satisfied if Dennis Kucinich was president."

The White House, constantly under fire from expected enemies on the right, has been frustrated by nightly attacks on cable news shows catering to the left, where Obama and top lieutenants like Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel have been excoriated for abandoning the public option in healthcare reform; for not moving faster to close the prison at Guantánamo Bay; and for failing, so far, to end the ban on gays serving openly in the military. . . .

Gibbs said the professional left is not representative of the progressives who organized, campaigned, raised money and ultimately voted for Obama.

Progressives, Gibbs said, are the liberals outside of Washington "in America," and they are grateful for what Obama has accomplished in a shattered economy with uniform Republican opposition and a short amount of time.

So, to recap: (1) The Professional Left are totally irrelevant losers who speak for absolutely nobody, and certainly nobody in Real America who matters; but (2) they're ruining everything for the White House!!! And: if you criticize the President, it's only because you're such a rabid extremist that you harbor a secret desire to eliminate the Pentagon -- that's how anti-American you are! You're such a Far Left extremist that Dennis Kucinich isn't far enough Left for you, you subversive, drug-using hippies! As David Frum **put it today**: "More proof of my longtime thesis, Repub pols fear the GOP base; Dem pols hate the Dem base." The Democrats have been concerned about a lack of enthusiasm on the part of their base headed into the midterm elections. These sorts of rabid, caricatured, Fox-News-copying attacks on the Left will undoubtedly help generate more enthusiasm -- more loud clapping -- for the Democrats. I know I'm eager to go canvass and clap for Democrats after reading Gibbs' noble, inspiring vision. If it were Gibbs' goal to be as petulant and self-pitying as possible, what could he have done differently?

Perhaps one day the White House can work itself up to express this sort of sputtering rage against the Right, or the Wall Street thieves who destroyed the American economy, or the permanent factions that control Washington. Until then, we'll have to satisfy ourselves with White House explanations that the Real Culprits are not (of course) them, but the Professional Left, that is simultaneously totally irrelevant and ruining everything. I'll give credit to Gibbs for putting his name on this outburst: these are usually **the things they say anonymously** and then deny afterward on the record that it's what they think.

UPDATE: On September 9, 2008 -- roughly two months before the election -- Barack Obama **addressed a large, enthusiastic crowd and said**: "As president, I will lead a new era of accountability in education. But see, I don't just want to hold our teachers accountable; **I want to hold our government accountable. I want you to hold me accountable.**" In 20 short months, we've gone from "hold me accountable" to "get drug tested," you wretched ingrates.

UPDATE II: Robert Gibbs:

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TPM:



President Barack Obama (wdcpx.com)

Expert Consensus: Obama Mimics Bush On State Secrets

By Zachary Roth - April 9, 2009, 6:20PM

Is the Obama administration mimicking its predecessor on issues of secrecy and the war on terror?

During the presidential campaign, Obama criticized Bush for being too quick to invoke the state secrets claim. But last Friday, his Justice Department **filed a motion** in a warrantless wiretapping lawsuit, brought by

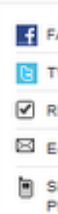
Electronic Frontier Foundation:

Charlie Savage, *The New York Times*:

Obama Upholds Detainee Policy in Afghanistan

By CHARLIE SAVAGE
Published: February 21, 2009

WASHINGTON — The Obama administration has told a federal judge that military detainees in [Afghanistan](#) have no legal right to challenge their imprisonment there, embracing a key argument of former President Bush's legal team.



Bob Herbert, *The New York Times*:

OP-ED COLUMNIST

Who Are We?

By BOB HERBERT

Published: June 22, 2009

Policies that were wrong under George W. Bush are no less wrong because Barack Obama is in the White House.



One of the most disappointing aspects of the early months of the Obama administration has been its unwillingness to end many of the mind-numbing abuses linked to the so-called war on terror and to establish a legal and moral framework designed to prevent those abuses from ever occurring again.

Anthony Romero:

ACLU chief 'disgusted' with Obama

The top official at the American Civil Liberties Union seems to be losing patience with President Barack Obama and his administration.

Speaking at a conference of liberal activists Wednesday morning, ACLU Executive Director Anthony Romero didn't mince his words about the administration's handling of civil liberties issues.

The Hill:

Feingold sees similarities between Bush and Obama on intelligence sharing

By Susan Crabtree - 10/13/09 08:00 PM ET

Sen. Russ Feingold (D-Wis.) voiced his suspicion that the Obama administration is stonewalling on intelligence.

NYT Editorial Page:

The report from the physicians' group does not prove its case beyond doubt — how could it when so much is still hidden? — but it rightly calls on the White House and Congress to investigate the potentially illegal human experimentation and whether those who authorized or conducted it should be punished. Those are just two of the many unresolved issues from the Bush administration that President Obama and Congressional leaders have swept under the carpet.

I hope there are enough drug testing facilities to accommodate Talking Points Memo reporters, Charlie Savage, the lawyers from EFF, Bob Herbert, Anthony Romero, Russ Feingold, and *The New York Times* Editorial Board. I don't know anyone who asserts that Obama is "the same" as Bush -- I don't believe that and never asserted that -- but if anyone needs to be "drug tested," it would be those denying that many of Bush's most controversial policies and actions have been embraced in full by Barack Obama.