

R O M E  
WASN'T  
BURNT  
*in a* DAY

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*The Real Deal on  
How Politicians, Bureaucrats,  
and Other Washington Barbarians  
Are Bankrupting America*

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J O E S C A R B O R O U G H



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# Introduction

**I** AM GROWING CYNICAL in my old age. Ten years after being swept into Congress as a thirty-one-year-old reformer, I have seen leaders of my political party conspire with Washington's biggest spenders to sell out the future of America. Not too long ago you knew who was on which side. Democrats would get elected by promising to launch new federal programs that would cost taxpayers billions of dollars of their hard-earned money. For instance, Hillary Clinton's recent promise to a group of San Francisco business owners that if they elected Democrats to power, people like them would pay higher taxes for "the common good"

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shows the Democratic Party is holding up its end of the bargain.

Unfortunately, the Republican Party of my youth is nowhere to be found. The once-proud party of Ronald Reagan is doing nothing to hold true to the ideals President Reagan held so dear—smaller government and less spending.

Under Republican leadership in Congress and the White House, the United States is suffering its largest federal deficit ever. Our national debt is rocketing toward \$7,500,000,000,000—that's *seven and a half trillion dollars!* Interest rates are once again shooting upward because of reckless Washington spending. Meanwhile, Democrats and their new ideological allies on Capitol Hill are responding to America's growing crisis by voting through trillion-dollar entitlement programs, massive pork-barrel spending projects, and annual congressional pay raises.

A few Republicans are becoming understandably embarrassed. Before Congress rushed out of town for the 2004 summer recess, a small group of mavericks tried to pass modest budget reforms that would have placed spending caps on legislation and allowed the president to single out pork-barrel bills for elimination. Commonsense proposals like these have been staples of the Republican agenda since Ronald Reagan was president, but when young GOP members placed these provisions in a bill appropriately titled "The Family Budget Protection Act of 2004," Republican leaders worked with Democratic Party bosses to crush the reforms by a vote of 326 to 88.

These days when it comes to wasting your tax dollars there's not a dime's worth of difference between Republicans and Democrats. Sadly, less than a month after the world watched Ronald Reagan ride off into the California sunset, the

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*Wall Street Journal* declared Reagan's party spiritually dead.

"Once upon a time, in a Congress far, far away," the *Journal* began in a June 30, 2004, editorial, "Republicans believed in smaller government. But you wouldn't know it now."

The conservative newspaper concluded its "GOP Lost Souls" editorial by suggesting that the Republican Party would soon be cast out of power if it continued betraying American taxpayers.

"Republicans should understand, principal aside, sooner or later they are setting themselves up for a political fall. If Republicans won't campaign against spending to reduce the federal deficit, they can soon expect to find themselves back in the minority."

In a political season where partisans accuse their political opponents of killing little children to gain access to oil pipelines, the *Wall Street Journal's* criticism of Republican leaders must be disconcerting to demagogues like Michael Moore and Jesse Jackson. These cartoon characters can vilify Republicans by portraying them as baby killers or slaveholders, but they can't teach you a thing about how Washington, D.C., really works.

I can.

What you are about to read isn't the stuff you see in civics books or newspapers. Instead, I'm going to give you the Real Deal on how the White House, Congress, and Washington bureaucrats conspire to ensure their political survival while sticking American taxpayers with the bill. If you are an avid reader of political books, you probably expect me to explain this nasty little scheme by launching a blistering attack on

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one political party while lavishing rapturous praise on the other. After all, isn't that the rage in the publishing world these days?

Republicans make millions writing books that paint Democrats as treacherous, evil little beasts who possess dwarfish hearts, while Democrats get rich slandering Republicans as conniving liars who bend the truth as they send young Americans to their early deaths for a few extra gallons of oil—lying all the while. Oh, yeah, and did I mention, these Republicans seem to lie a lot.

This profitable form of political hate speech reached its ugly climax with the release of Michael Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11*. What once would have passed for bizarre Internet conspiracy theories suddenly became mainstream cinematic fare and the object of praise by Democratic congressmen, senators, and party bosses.

Was it a dream? Did my eyes really see Democratic leaders praising a film that was so virulently anti-American that the terrorist group Hezbollah offered to help distribute Moore's movie in the Middle East?

It had to be a dream. That could not have really been Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe and half the Democrats in Congress at the *Fahrenheit 9/11* premiere sucking up to Michael Moore. After all, it was the same Michael Moore who opposed the United Nations involvement in Iraq because most Americans supported the war, and "that the majority must now sacrifice their children until enough blood has been let that maybe—just maybe—God and the Iraqi people will forgive us in the end."

Had hatred for George W. Bush really infected the souls of

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liberals so deeply that they eagerly embraced Moore as their political savior—despite the fact that he defended Iraqi terrorists killing American troops?

“The Iraqis who have risen up against the occupation are not ‘insurgents’ or ‘terrorists’ or ‘The Enemy,’” Moore wrote in an April 24, 2004, screed posted on his website. “They are the REVOLUTION, the Minutemen, and their numbers will grow—and they will win.”

I can understand why Hezbollah wants Moore’s message spread across terror camps in the Middle East. I just can’t figure out why the Democratic Party would embrace a man calling for the death of young American troops and the success of Iraqi terrorists.

I wonder how Michael Moore’s hate speech plays in the homes of Americans who saw their child’s head cut off and shoved in front of a video camera by these “Minutemen.” Not well, I would imagine.

As a congressman, newspaper publisher of the *Florida Sun*, and host of MSNBC’s *Scarborough Country*, I understand that we live in mean political times. Impeachment, the 2000 election, September 11th, the war in Iraq, and a score of political battles going back to Watergate have hardened even the most pragmatic minds inside the Beltway. But as one who has peaked behind the Wizard’s curtain, I can assure you that neither party comes to the table with clean hands. That is why simply picking a political party to cheer for while slamming the other side as the singular cause for Western civilization’s decline is not only misguided, it is dangerous. Americans who buy into this political circus act are distracted from the real sickness that infects Washington.

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Unlike George Washington or the Roman general Cincinnatus, who left his farm to save Rome and then promptly returned home after victory was secured, most political leaders in Congress seem fixated on holding power in perpetuity by funneling taxpayer funds to their favorite pork-barreled projects. Their worldview is limited to a two-year term and a single congressional district. Making matters worse, each member secures his own election (and re-election) by trading whatever votes are required to pass pork-barrel bills that keep his voters happy. And because Republicans and Democrats conspire to gerrymander one another's districts so incumbents are rarely challenged at the polls, the turnover rate on Capitol Hill is lower than in the old Soviet Politburo. This means reckless politicians rarely have to pay the price for their misdeeds. Who does, you ask? You do.

For readers seeking partisan insults instead of political insights, I can assure you that your local bookstore will provide scores of titles guaranteed to reinforce any preexisting prejudices one might harbor against a wide array of political enemies. But this is not such a book. The goal here is to show you how Washington truly functions by taking you behind the closed doors of Congress, into Oval Office meetings, onto Air Force One, and deep inside the corridors of power to which few Americans are granted access.

Many political experts selling partisan comic books these days haven't actually been behind enemy lines long enough to know what goes on in Washington, let alone tell you who you must hate and why. In fact, most recent and notable propagandists have never spent a single day working alongside Washington power brokers or attending meetings shut off



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from staff members, the press corps, and the outside world. If they had, their *Pleasantville*, black-and-white version of Washington would have immediately been shattered by the cold realities lurking inside the marble palaces our politicians built for themselves on the muddy banks of the Potomac River. Conspiracy theories forwarded by Michael Moore or those put forth in the *Clinton Chronicles* may grab headlines by churning up partisan hatred, but they only further distort America's perception of Washington.

### **Fat White Pink Boys Beware**

I don't kid myself. I was a politician long enough to know this book will enrage the Washington insiders I have long identified as "Fat White Pink Boys"—a term I picked up while serving in Congress. Anyone who has worked more than a few minutes on Capitol Hill knows of whom I speak.

Fat White Pink Boys are a certain class of political hacks who checked their manhood at Washington's city limits. These suspender-wearing political operatives put the *sick* in *sycophant* and will do anything within their power to protect their bosses, their government jobs, and their standing among peers. And because living the life of a political leech is all most of these Fat White Pink Boys have ever known, they can't comprehend why anyone (such as myself) who has ever drawn a paycheck from the Feds would attack the Mother Ship that nurtures all of their political and financial needs.

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The Mother Ship in this case being the federal bureaucracy and all its enablers.

I suspect Republican FWPB will be the most offended by this book. After all, party bosses teach you early on that the golden rule of the Beltway is to protect your own. The political operative who is willing to lie, shred, and cover up for his party is a valuable commodity to Washington heavyweights. This might explain why so few members of Ronald Reagan's party have dared to speak out against the shameless performance of Republicans on federal spending, the budget deficit, and America's nearly \$7.5 trillion debt.

Congressional rookies are taught the importance of party loyalty upon their arrival to the nation's capital. Freshmen congressmen and senators are first shown the proverbial carrot. Party leaders let new members know that those who play ball will be rewarded. Loyal soldiers will be assigned to the best committees, powerful leaders and chairmen will be put on their fundraising committees to twist arms in the lobbying community, and maybe, if they are especially well behaved, the Speaker of the House or the majority leader will travel to their home district to help raise a few hundred thousand dollars. Starting one's congressional career with a huge fundraiser is a good way to assure a freshman congressman that his toughest election is behind him.

If the carrot fails to entice, the stick is quickly pulled from the party leader's back pocket to beat the wayward member over the head. And if a member dares to speak out against his party leader's latest stupid bill or embarrassing statement, the offending member is quickly reminded that the party neither forgives nor forgets—ever.

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For movie fans, I refer you to the kissing scene between Michael and Fredo Corleone in *The Godfather: Part II*, when Michael lets his older brother know the penalty for going against the family is death. Before having him killed, Michael sounds like the U.S. senator his father always wanted him to be when he says to his disloyal brother, “Fredo, you’re nothing to me now. You’re not a brother, you’re not a friend. I don’t want to know you or what you do.”

Party leaders, like the mob, give no credit to those who show loyalty to the family only 90 percent of the time. When I left Capitol Hill, a Republican Party official who had shamelessly sucked up to me during my years in Washington told a reporter that he was glad I was finally getting out of Congress because, “We were getting pretty tired of Joe Scarborough always attacking the Republican Party.”

Always attacking the Republican Party? That would come as breaking news to Bill and Hillary Clinton, Al Gore, and scores of other Democratic leaders who had to endure my appearances on national news programs hundreds of times during my congressional career. Whether during the Contract with America, the balanced budget debate, the government shut-down, or the 2000 election, I was regularly in lockstep with the Republican Party line. But the GOP leader’s reprimand for my being “disloyal” to fellow Republicans underscores a more important truth in Washington politics: The party demands nothing less than blind loyalty to its leaders. This reality is critical for conservatives wanting to understand why well-intentioned Republicans and Democrats have betrayed their core principles, broken campaign promises, and bankrupted America.

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For most Republicans and a handful of Democrats, the pathway to Congress was paved with campaign flyers promising *Less spending! Less taxes! Less regulation!* The ideological truth behind this Reaganesque campaign cliché is the belief that as the government's power increases, the individual's freedom decreases. This equation is simple. A centralized state's growth is fed by the money and personal freedoms of individual Americans. The more you are taxed, the more money the federal government accrues. The more money the federal government has, the more power it has. The more power it has, the less power you have. It is a simple concept that Republicans once grasped.

But these days Republicans are in no mood to be reminded that they seized control of Congress in 1994 by promising voters to cut the size of government, balance the budget, and return power to individual Americans.

Sadly, the first draft of history has painted these Republicans as liars.

I am sure that Democratic hacks will also be annoyed that I tell the truth about their conspiracy with Republicans to bilk billions from American taxpayers. Democratic bosses play tough for the cameras. They even embrace "documentary" filmmakers who seem to cheer for Islamic terrorists while supporting the killing of American troops for sick redemptive purposes. Democratic politicians must think this hate speech impresses their political base.

But when the cameras are turned off, these same Democrats buddy up to their Republican friends in Congress because, in the end, all Washington politicians are on the same team. Victory for this team is achieved when all members get

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enough pork siphoned to their districts to ensure re-election and a splendid time for all. Meanwhile, federal spending and the national debt grow exponentially.

Occasionally a Republican like Dick Cheney takes a Democrat's slander personally, and he'll tell a senator to conduct a certain sexual act upon himself. But in the Capitol corridors, this is the exception rather than the rule. Democrats and Republicans huff and sneer for the camera but are usually on the same side when it's time to spend your money. I know Democratic insiders will dismiss this political truth as ideological drivel from a right-wing television host who was once a right-wing congressman. One competing talk show host has even gone so far to dismiss me as a "former neo-Nazi congressman."

But don't be distracted by such insults. In Congress, I did fight the conservative fight when it came to protecting American taxpayers from big-spending politicians. But I was decidedly more moderate than most of my GOP colleagues when it came to issues like the environment and human rights. I never really figured out what was so conservative about paying royalty relief to big oil companies, or corporate subsidies to mining interests, or giving free passes to loggers in national forests. In fact, I never figured out how taking shortcuts concerning America's environment for a quick buck was conservative. It seems like an obvious contradiction to me.

But Washington politics is fueled by such contradictions. That is why I am writing this book. You need to know what your representative does behind your back when he is Washington. You need to know that he is probably more loyal to his political party than to the needs of your family. You need

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to know that Washington demands such loyalty and why the congressman you elect chooses the party over the people almost every time.

Regardless of the prevailing wisdom in Washington, I still believe loyalty should attach more to ideas than party platforms. That is why when either Republicans or Democrats screw up, I have considered it my responsibility as a reporter, a congressman, a newspaper publisher, and now an author to tell you the ugly truth. And whether my former colleagues in Washington like it or not, that is exactly what I am about to do.