

Is Obamacare Barack Obama's Vietnam?

When Vice President Lyndon Johnson returned to Capitol Hill after his first White House meeting with the new team assembled by President John F. Kennedy, he rushed to talk with his mentor, House Speaker Sam Rayburn.

LBJ told his fellow Texan how impressed he was with Kennedy's "best and brightest." He was especially taken with Defense Secretary Robert Strange McNamara, the ex-CEO of Ford Motor Company. Lyndon described that "feller with the sta-comb in his hair" as being the brightest of the brightest.

The bald-headed Texas politico, Rayburn, narrowed his eyes and looked at Johnson over his glass of bourbon and branch water and said with some skepticism, "Maybe, Lyndon, but I'd feel a lot better if just one of them had ever run for sheriff."

We know that John F. Kennedy made some of the earliest commitments of U.S. ground forces to South Vietnam, but their numbers were still quite small when Kennedy met his tragic death in a Dallas motorcade. Johnson became president and vowed not to order "American boys to do what Asian boys should be doing." That was fighting Communist subversion in southeast Asia.

Johnson carried that message into the 1964 election against conservative Sen. Barry Goldwater. In that campaign, Johnson staked out his position as the peace candidate and charged that Goldwater would get America into a nuclear war. Johnson's campaign used its own version of a nuclear weapon on the hapless Goldwater campaign by running the infamous "Daisy" television ad. It was probably the most despicable attack ad in history. But it helped Johnson win a 44-state landslide and bury Barry Goldwater.

Do anything just to win. That was the seeming message from the 1964 election. The very next year, 1965, President Johnson began his escalation of U.S. forces in South Vietnam. The number of troops, most of them draftees, would climb under Johnson to 525,000 men. LBJ was sending more than half a million American boys, it seemed, to do the task he said that Asian boys ought to do.

Thus opened up the yawning chasm of the credibility gap. Johnson's presidency was consumed by the Vietnam War. And Johnson himself soon was reviled by his own party's grass roots. In 1964, his huge picture had been displayed over the speaker's rostrum at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. That floor-to-ceiling banner was as large as many of those carried in May Day parades in Moscow's Red Square.

Just four years later, President Johnson was driven from office by opposition among Democrats. And he dared not even show his face at his party's 1968 convention, that riotous affair in Chicago.

All of this was brought to mind when President Obama promised to bring in "the best and the brightest" to fix his problem-plagued website. Liberals in the media had all read the famous David Halberstam book with its bitterly ironic title: *The Best and the Brightest*. This extraordinary statement led even liberals to ask the pointed question: If you are only now bringing in your best and brightest, who did you hire to roll this thing out in the first place? Congress—especially the House—will have its work cut out for it in finding out who made the decisions to hire CGI and other failed contractors, who decided to go ahead with the rollout, or tumbleout, despite many warnings of trouble ahead.

Congress will also want to know what the administration did to assure enrollees that their most sensitive health and personal information—yielded to the government under penalty of a

fine—would be protected. Recent hard experience with the IRS does not give anyone confidence that patient confidentiality will be respected.

Will Edward Snowden be hired as an Obamacare “navigator”? Well, clearly not *that* Edward Snowden, the NSA contract employee who skipped to Hong Kong and then to Moscow, hemorrhaging top secret information all the way. But what guarantee do we have that the Obama navigators will undergo detailed and reliable background security checks to demonstrate loyalty and professional competence? How do we know they are not hiring tomorrow’s Edward Snowden?

Wall Street Journal columnist and former Reagan speechwriter Peggy Noonan provides this picture of Team Obama’s “best and brightest” young White House aides:

“For four years I have been told, by those who’ve worked in the administration and those who’ve visited it as volunteers or contractors, that the Obama White House isn’t organized. It’s just full of chatter. Meetings don’t begin on time, there’s no agenda, the list of those invited seems to expand and contract at somebody’s whim. There is a tendency to speak of how a problem will look and how its appearance should be handled, as opposed to what the problem is and should be done about it. People speak airily, without point. They scroll down, see a call that has to be returned, pop out and then in again. Maybe the first community that our Community-Organizer-in-Chief should organize is his own White House staff.”

We’re not at Vietnam-level dissent and protest yet. It’s still early. Obamacare has only been bedeviling us since October. But wait. If we see new waves of insurance cancellations, if there are more complaints that the back end of the website is not fully functional, that it is not providing assurance of insurance, if it turns out that the information we are forced by law to provide to Mr. Obama’s navigators has not been protected—or worse, has even become “a hackers’ buffet”—then

stand by for trouble.

We should all pray the country doesn't have to go through what we only barely survived in the 1960s. Barack Obama may have forgotten the violence and anti-Americanism of the radical left, but millions of Americans remember it with painful clarity.

The loudest opposition to LBJ and his false promises about Vietnam came from the left. Conservatives did not go into the streets then, burning draft cards and American flags. We cannot expect that conservatives would ever engage in the kind of ugly disruptions that characterized the anti-war left and its massive demonstrations, bombings, torchings and hateful rhetoric.

Still, the tea party is fully committed to opposing Obamacare and its threats to American liberties. Their ranks may soon be joined by everyday Americans who were told over and over again: If you like your health care insurance plan, you can keep it.

Tea party activists may soon tell voters in the run-up to the midterm elections: If you like President Obama's "best and brightest," you can keep them. It is still the responsibility of citizens to hold leaders accountable. Perhaps Peggy Noonan is right: The real problem is "low information leadership."

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