



Up Front

God, guns and prejudice.

By C.J. Hadley

During the Democratic debate on ABC-TV, April 16, when asked if he favors an increase in the capital gains tax, Sen. Barack Obama said: “I certainly wouldn’t go above what existed under Bill Clinton, which was 28 percent.” (George W. Bush dropped it to 15 percent.)

“When the capital gains rate dropped, revenues from the tax increased. The government took in more money,” said ABC’s Charles Gibson. “So why raise it at all, especially given the fact that 100 million people in this country own stock and would be affected?”

To the same question, Sen. Hillary Clinton replied: “The president has been good to people who are doing well, and that’s great. But it was better for our country when we had an economy that lifted everyone up at the same time, and we had that during the 1990s. I don’t want to take one more penny of tax money from anybody. But what I want to do is make some smart investments. And I was the first to come out with a strategic energy fund, where we need to be investing in clean renewable energy. And I think we could put five million Americans to work.”

I was reeling through lack of understanding, and it was Tim Findley who brought me back to reality. He suggested an editorial about bitterness. We had heard the remarks by Obama, confiding to a bunch of rich supporters in San Francisco, that he has found many rural people in America to be “bitter” and seeking to express their frustration through God, guns and prejudice.

It would be easy to be bitter in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania—where industrial production has been shut down and shipped overseas to cheaper labor markets. It would be easy to be bitter in the West—where natural resources have been shut down and allowed to rot. And it would be just as easy to be bitter when multibillion-dollar nonprofit “conservationist” outfits pick up easy cash from the federal government, to “protect” and stop what’s left of real and honest production in the rural West.

Neither of these candidates for president seem to know anything about rural America. And they don’t want to know.

“People are angry and bitter, fed up most-

ly with the abuse, arrogance and general ineptitude of government and of national politicians in particular,” Findley says. “People who feed this country, who provide the raw materials to build this country and who, if they were allowed to, could solve even the energy crisis of this country are bitter, fed up, and frustrated. But you don’t need to fear their ministers or be wary of their guns. You don’t need to think they are about to burst into madness and insanity. What you need to do if you are conscious of what it takes to lead is listen to them.

“Listen, like Bill Clinton didn’t, when a young Oregon girl in his first campaign begged him not to take her father’s logging job. He lost the job; Clinton got the endorsement of the Sierra Club. Listen, as Obama seemed not to hear, when people of Ohio or Michigan tell him they were regarded for generations as the most efficient workers in the world until a ‘global economy’ made it possible to pay slave wages for barely trained workers in China and other countries. Hear something when they tell these politicians with conservationist coins in their ears that we can produce energy and wealth without harming the environment, if only we would use the resources we have.

“Bitter? Yes, people in the rural West are bitter—not just over unreasonable government regulations and interference, but over the steady expansion of wilderness regions that lock them out, as if they were prisoners on their own land.”

Findley wonders if the politicians will step forward from these debates to offer encouragement to rural people who only want the opportunity to once again prove the strength and innovative ideas of this nation. Or will they wait until there are fat-cat nonprofit so-called “environmental” organizations sitting in the audience on their billions of nontaxable dollars.

“Frustrated? Hell yes. Downright gut sick of the phony political ‘leaders’ who are cowards at heart.”

Both Obama and Hillary say they are the candidates we have been waiting for, at least since John F. Kennedy...a woman and a black man. And the rural West is as proud as anywhere else in the nation that we have come this far. Yet, what rural Americans are saying is that they have sacrificed enough from accepting lies, corruption, and arrogance.

“Previous politicians have taken their jobs, ruined their communities, and challenged their faith,” Findley says. “What they mostly have left is their pride. Not bitterness. Not prejudice. Not guns. Pride. One wonders if the candidates can understand that.” ■