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**Hillary Clinton and the Northern Strategy**

by STEVE HENDRICKS



For decades now, we liberals have been shaking our heads in wonder at the working stiffs who give the rich bastards atop the GOP their votes. There’s hardly a liberal alive who can’t recite what’s the matter with Kansas: the downtrodden whites in their double-wides, so enraged by their dwindling slice of the American pie that they vote for hucksters who vow to keep Negro hands off their lily white daughters, homosexual hands off their wedding cakes, Mexican-rapist hands off their orchards, atheist hands off their Nativity scenes, guvmint hands off their assault weapons. The hucksters, with the votes in *their* hands, go off to D.C. and sock it to the suckers who sent them there—shipping their jobs abroad, rigging the tax code against them, gutting their schools, taking swipes at their Social Security and Medicare. To pacify the suckers, the hucksters throw them some nourishing scraps. They block a bill to register firearms here, pass a Defense of Marriage Act there, decry the War on Christmas with their fellow shriekers on Fox. Donald John Trump is just the latest in a long parade of flimflammers to adopt the Southern Strategy. His only innovations are speaking bluntly rather than in code and cranking up the volume. It’s a pitiful farce, no?

But here’s an equally pathetic farce that you don’t hear about much: Democrats are just as conned, only in politer tones. Ask a group of liberals what they want in a candidate, and you’ll get a sketch of a champion who will fight for income equality, rein in big banks, defeat ruinous trade agreements, restore our battered civil liberties, look to diplomacy before war, and stop the devastation of our climate. Sure enough, in every election year Democratic candidates come along peddling such wares, and after election day the victors go off to D.C. and sock it to the suckers who sent them there—shipping their jobs abroad with NAFTA and Trans-Pacific Partnership, deregulating the banks that are screwing them, beating back calls for a living wage, gutting welfare, logging old-growth forests, drilling the Arctic, tapping their phones and reading their emails, rebuffing universal healthcare, canning whistleblowers, fighting endless wars, torturing prisoners, and much, much more. Like the Republican con men, their Democratic counterparts throw the suckers a few scraps. They defend the worst assaults on *Roe v. Wade* (while averting their eyes as the states whittle *Roe* to nothingness; parental notification, anyone? waiting periods? admitting privileges?). They pass a family medical leave bill (unpaid, naturally, and applying only to businesses with 50 or more employees). They make the most token of gestures against global warming (must “nonbinding” precede *every* international “agreement”?). This Democratic game plan goes by many names: triangulation, the Third Way, “reaching across the aisle,” “getting things done.” But its true name should be the Northern Strategy, for it is the Dems’ own version of the Southern. Any leftist who wonders why her voice isn’t heard in Washington shouldn’t be asking what’s the matter with Kansas. She should be asking what’s the matter with New York.

And at this particular moment, there’s something particularly the matter with New York—and Massachusetts and Pennsylvania and Florida—that’s worth asking about: why are so many liberals lining up to buy the same snake oil in 2016 that they’ve bought since at least 1992? The shyster who’s peddling the oil this time around is the Northern Strategist *par excellence*, a scammer who has been exposed time and again for the Tory wolf in Labor clothing that she is. I speak, of course, of Hillary Rodham Clinton. And in her duplicity she is little better than Trump (or Ryan or McConnell or any of the other GOP big men). She is more genteel, to be sure, but she is the same in dangling tempting bait while quietly sticking it to the voters she is duping.

Here’s a précis of her more egregious frauds, a veritable case study in how to work the Northern Strategy:

**She bills herself a champion of Main Street over Wall Street, but she has been a lackey of Wall Street her entire political life.** Candidate Clinton has put forward what she calls a bold plan to reform the excesses of Wall Street, the centerpiece of which is a tax on high-frequency trading (HFT). Just one problem: “her proposal is very narrowly targeted to one specific practice, in which a trading computer tells a marketplace that it’s going to make a large number of trades but then cancels them before they go through,” [writes](http://thinkprogress.org/economy/2015/10/09/3710844/clinton-tax-high-frequency-trading-critics/) Alan Pyke at *ThinkProgess*. “All other forms of HFT would be free to continue as normal under the proposal.” Only a dupe would have expected otherwise. Clinton’s Wall Street record is strewn with such gems as [refusing](http://thehill.com/policy/finance/247700-adviser-clinton-wont-push-glass-steagall-bank-bill) to support reinstatement of the Glass-Steagall Act (whose elimination contributed mightily to the crash of 2008), [rebuffing](http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2015/07/23/hillary-clinton-rebuffs-liberals-push-to-break-up-banks/) calls to break up the big banks, and helping those banks [screw their customers](http://www.ibtimes.com/hillary-clinton-vs-elizabeth-warren-big-differences-despite-claims-contrary-1640810) by making it ridiculously hard to renegotiate credit card debts and declare bankruptcy. In fact, thanks in part to Senator Clinton, it’s easier for a bank to declare bankruptcy and renegotiate its debts than it is for you. Does it surprise you that [four of her top five donors](https://www.opensecrets.org/politicians/summary.php?cycle=Career&cid=N00000019) over the last 16 years are Wall Street firms? If so, count yourself among the duped. Are you shocked that among the truly unscrupulous tycoons she has taken cash from is one Donald Trump? The Don, in addition to giving big to her senate campaigns, [gave](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/h-a-goodman/bernie-sanders-wont-accept-money-from-billionaires-donald-trump-donated-100000-to-hillary-clinton_b_7799576.html) between $100,000 and $250,000 to the Clinton Foundation. Although the babble of economic populism may burble off Clinton’s lips on the campaign trail, and although Democrats by the million fall for it, “[d]own on Wall Street they don’t believe it for a minute,” *Politico*’s William Cohen [writes](http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/11/why-wall-street-loves-hillary-112782). Indeed, “the big bankers love Clinton, and by and large they badly want her to be president.” ([Many](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/the-true-love-story-of-hillary-and-wall-street/article/2576569) are the [reports](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/22/us/politics/wall-st-ties-linger-as-image-issue-for-hillary-clinton.html?_r=0) that have [said](http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/18/opinions/louis-hillary-clinton-wall-st-/) the [same](http://www.truthdig.com/eartotheground/item/make_no_mistake_wall_street_loves_hillary_20150525).) I don’t know what’s sadder—that Big Money is smarter than the average Dem, or that average Dems will be shocked when she chooses Wall Street over them if she lands in the Oval Office.

**She says she’ll protect workers from bad trade deals, then pushes the deals through—and workers over the cliff.** Make no mistake: trade deals like NAFTA and the Trans-Pacific Partnership are all about sending American jobs to cheap-labor countries and using the threat of outsourcing to drive down the wages of whatever jobs remain. Trashing environmental regulations is a secondary but equally pleasing goal. Does anyone remember that as first lady in the 1990s, Clinton backed NAFTA as [full-throatedly](http://www.salon.com/2015/10/08/memo_to_progressives_hillary_clinton_is_lying_to_you/) as her husband did? Or that as senator she went to India and [defended outsourcing](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/07/AR2007090702780.html), saying, “[W]e are not in favor of putting up fences”? And yet upon running for president in 2008, she about-faced, claiming to have seen the light: NAFTA, she said, was a [mistake](http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2008/feb/25/barack-obama/clinton-has-changed-on-nafta/), and she just [hated](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/09/07/AR2007090702780.html) seeing telemarketing jobs sent to places like India. But with the campaign safely behind her, now–Secretary of State Clinton had another Damascene conversion and threw her weight behind the devastating TPP no fewer than [45 times](http://edition.cnn.com/2015/06/15/politics/45-times-secretary-clinton-pushed-the-trade-bill-she-now-opposes/). The woman’s capacity for flipping, however, is outdone only by her capacity for flopping, so back on the campaign trail last year, she [said](http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/statements/2015/oct/08/hillary-clinton/hillary-clinton-now-opposes-trans-pacific-partners/) she was reserving judgment on fast-tracking TPP. In the end, she mustered all of her courage and finally declared she was against the deal—after it had passed. The balls on that woman. Could we have expected anything different from an eminence who served six years on the board of Wal-Mart and [remained silent](http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/story?id=4218509) as that anti-worker colossus waged a virulent campaign against unions?

**Clinton likes to cut the figure of a restrained diplomat, but she was and remains a trigger-happy hawk.** Every so often she makes a show of advocating diplomacy over belligerence, as when she recently [blasted](http://www.defenseone.com/politics/2015/07/clinton-uses-cuba-attack-gops-force-first-foreign-policy/118788/) the GOP for looking at Cuba through an “outdated Cold War lens” and for pursuing a policy of force-first rather than diplomacy-first: “We cannot afford to let out-of-touch, out-of-date partisan ideas and candidates rip away all the progress we’ve made. We can’t go back to cowboy diplomacy and reckless warmongering.” But cowboy diplomacy and reckless warmongering have been the hallmarks of her work in affairs foreign. Not only did she vote for the Iraq War while in the Senate, but years after it was plain to everyone that the war was a disaster—a disaster, no less, sold with the most brazen of lies—she still [defended her vote](http://www.thenation.com/article/hillary-hawk/). Not until 2014, as she prepared to face a Democratic electorate thoroughly disgusted with the war did she do the Clinton pirouette and lament her vote as a [mistake](http://onpolitics.usatoday.com/2014/07/01/hillary-clinton-iraq-war-mistake/). She has uttered no laments for her warmongering while secretary of state. Among the [highlights](http://www.thenation.com/article/left-ought-worry-about-hillary-clinton-hawk-and-militarist-2016/): successfully pushing Obama to wage war in Libya in 2011 (which turned out just ducky, provided you like a power vacuum and the anarchy of hundreds of militias fighting for supremacy, not least of them ISIS), successfully pushing him to escalate the war in Afghanistan in 2009 and slow the drawdown in 2010 (fabulous results, those), and pushing but, alas, failing to get him to wage war in Syria in 2012 (what could have gone wrong there?). Her résumé was well [summarized](http://www.mediaite.com/tv/scarborough-hillary-more-of-a-neo-con-than-the-2016-gop-nominee/) by right-wing blowhard “Morning Joe” Scarborough: “Hillary is the neocon’s neocon. It’s going to be fascinating—if she decides to run and she gets the nomination—that she will be more of a sabre-rattler and more of a neocon than the Republican nominee. . . . There’s hardly been a military engagement that Hillary hasn’t been for in the past 20 years.”

**Clinton loves to call Republicans nuts for denying global warming, and she claims she’s a climate champion—but at her best she has twiddled and diddled while the earth has burned, and at her worst she has lit a fistful of matches under the global fire.** Recently and prominently Clinton displayed her (supposed) climate change bona fides by declaring that global warming has contributed to the Syrian refugee crisis and that Obama is right to curb power plant emissions. Nice words, those. But as senator she [voted](http://scorecard.lcv.org/roll-call-vote/2006-219-offshore-drilling) in favor of such lovelies as offshore oil drilling, and as secretary of state she [led](http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2014/09/hillary-clinton-fracking-shale-state-department-chevron) an effort to open up other countries to fracking (she held up the U.S. fracking industry as a model) and [supported](http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2010/10/149542.htm) the calamitous Keystone XL pipeline. Back on the campaign trail last year, though, she went mum about the pipeline. “You won’t get me to talk about Keystone,” she [said](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jan/22/hillary-clinton-dodges-keystone-pipeline-questions-canada), counting on the dupes not to think too hard, “because I have steadily made clear that I’m not going to express an opinion.” Only after it became plain that not only did Democrats overwhelmingly oppose Keystone but it was going down to defeat anyway did she claim she [opposed](http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/hillary-clinton-finally-comes-out-against-keystone-pipeline) it. Her record on climate change is so piss-poor that she touts as her biggest climate accomplishment her supervision of the U.S. negotiations at the 2009 Copenhagen climate talks—one of the [mightiest failures](http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2015/10/hillary-clinton-climate-change-debate-copenhagen) in the history of the climate change fight, and it failed largely because she and other U.S. officials deep-sixed the negotiations even before they began. Is it merest coincidence that Clinton has long been in bed with Big Oil? Merest coincidence that, per a *Mother Jones* [report](http://www.motherjones.com/environment/2015/07/hillary-clinton-bundlers-fossil-fuel-lobbyists), nearly all—*nearly all*—of the lobbyists who are bundling campaign cash for her have worked in the fossil fuel industry? Merest coincidence that [oil companies](http://www.nationaljournal.com/energy/2015/02/18/big-oil-pro-keystone-groups-gave-millions-clinton-foundation) like ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips, to say nothing of [oil-rich countries](http://www.mcclatchydc.com/news/politics-government/election/article24782695.html) like Saudi Arabia and Qatar, have given tens of millions of dollars to her charitable foundation? Count yourself among the chumps if you’re surprised that her current [plan](http://www.businessinsider.com/hillary-clinton-climate-change-plan-2015-7) for climate change not only lacks an utterly essential carbon tax but even a specific commitment to cut greenhouse gases. Instead, she wants to give incentives for solar panels and wind turbines. Perhaps she’ll strew some daisies while she’s at it. [“Just plain silly”](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jul/29/hillary-clinton-climate-change-plan) was the nicest thing that noted climate scientist James Hansen could find to say about it, presumably because “just plain shit” wasn’t fit for genteel print.

**She has long argued that everyone should have access to healthcare, and for nearly as long she has worked against *universal* healthcare.** Give a devil her due: She supported Obamacare, which is more than you can say for most other conservatives. But for more than two decades, including when she was her husband’s healthcare czar, she has consistently argued against the only system that would provide universal health care—a single-payer system—notwithstanding that a single-payer, Medicare-for-all system is [supported](http://www.dailykos.com/story/2016/1/12/1469108/-81-of-Democrats-Support-Single-Payer-and-58-of-all-Americans) by 81 percent of Democrats and 58 percent of all Americans. In the past, she has deflected calls for single payer by trafficking in [extremely modest reforms](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/politics/election2008/2007-06-25-health-reform_N.htm); her current campaign proposal is [more of the same](http://time.com/4043242/hillary-clinton-bernie-sanders-health-care/). Her incrementalism has allowed voters to think she wanted universal health care, but, gosh, the political situation just wouldn’t allow it now. (Incremental Obama agreed, notwithstanding that he had the votes either to pass Medicare-for-all or to make an awfully good run at it; even had he failed, it could have leveraged us something better than the high-deductible, unaffordable mess of Obamacare.) But last week Clinton revealed her true colors (blood red) when her campaign ripped into Bernie Sanders and his Medicare-for-all plan with a mixture of ferocity and [outright lies](http://theweek.com/articles/598798) that [would do](http://www.salon.com/2016/01/14/hillary_clintons_absurd_bernie_smear_why_attacking_him_from_the_right_on_healthcare_makes_literally_no_sense_at_all/) a Republican [proud](http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2016/01/hillary_clinton_is_using_gop_fear_tactics_against_bernie_sanders_health.html). The motivation for her attacks? Tanking poll numbers in Iowa and New Hampshire. One suspects the $1 million she has taken from Big Pharma and $2.7 million from insurance companies probably weren’t bad [incentives](http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/10/14/hillary-takes-millions-in-campaign-cash-from-enemies) either. Would it stupefy you to learn that she often [leads](http://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/257234-clinton-brings-in-most-big-pharma-money-of-2016-field) all-comers, even Republican comers, in taking bag money from healthcare profiteers?

I could go on. She [vaguely](http://www.nationaljournal.com/s/37274/republican-2016-contenders-have-taken-positions-nsa-reform-where-does-hillary-clinton-stand) suggests our civil liberties may have been intruded upon but neglects to say she [voted](http://rare.us/story/where-do-the-2016-candidates-stand-on-the-patriot-act-and-mass-surveillance/) to eviscerate them with the USA Patriot Act in 2001 and with its reauthorization in 2006, and she says the leaks of heroic whistleblower Edward Snowden were an “outrageous” [aid to terrorists](http://www.nationaljournal.com/defense/2014/04/25/hillary-clinton-edward-snowdens-leaks-helped-terrorists). She says the harsh prison sentences that she and her pot-smoking husband pushed for petty drug-deals and the like were misguided, but she [opposes](http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/10/hillarys-hypocrisy-on-marijuana-legalization.html) the legalization of pot and ardently [backs](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hillary-clinton-death-penalty_56310eb4e4b00aa54a4c48c9) the death penalty. She trumpets her support for diversity and human rights, but she opposed gay marriage until it was a liability not to (until [2013](http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/06/hillary-clintons-gay-marriage-problem/372717/), to be precise). She says all working Americans should earn a decent living, but as recently as last year she [said](http://www.buzzfeed.com/kyleblaine/hillary-clinton-declines-to-support-a-national-15-minimum-wa#.thNnJ3LQRG) that raising the minimum wage to a living wage would be inappropriate, and she flatly [refused](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/jul/17/hillary-clinton-minimum-wage-cities-states-small-businesses) to say what she thought our pathetic $7.25 minimum should be raised to. Only after Sanders’s call for a $15 minimum had gained irresistible momentum did she reluctantly [support](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/hillary-clinton-raise-federal-minimum-wage-to-12-per-hour_56394247e4b0411d306eca12) a $12 wage.

Put simply, on issue after issue Hillary Clinton is a Republican in all but name. How does this consummate Northern Strategist keep getting away with it? The same way the Southern Strategists do. On a few vital issues, she votes with the Democratic base, sometimes even sincerely, just as an evangelical Southern Strategist may sincerely vote against The Gay Agenda. She backs abortion, she supports Obamacare, she has been decent on gun control.

Are these scraps enough to divert voters this time around—enough, that is, to distract them from the real-deal populist Bernie Sanders, a man who for many a year has called for breaking up the big banks, killing anti-labor trade deals, pulling back from eternal war, taxing carbon into the ground, giving everyone health care, legalizing pot, ending the death penalty, stopping unchecked spying on Americans, and much more to warm the chambers of the progressive heart? With each day, it seems less certain that Clinton’s scraps will suffice. Even general-election voters are swinging Sanders’s way, as [polls](http://www.dailykos.com/story/2015/10/27/1440343/-The-Electability-Argument-Is-Dead-All-the-Polls-Show-Bernie-Does-Better-Against-GOP-Than-Hillary) now show that Sanders, if the general election were held today, would fare better in head-to-head matches against Republicans than Clinton would. I don’t know which prospect is more appealing: that Sanders could write Republicrat Hillary Clinton’s political obituary or that he could write the Northern Strategy’s. In a sense the difference between the Clinton and Sanders campaigns is simply this: she’s betting liberals are too dumb to see her for what she is; he’s betting they’re smart enough to see him for what he is. It’s anyone’s guess which is so.

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