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Who's That Guy On the Ticket With Hillary?

"If you vote for him, you get me."
—Hillary Clinton

That's how the spouse of Bill Clinton modestly describes her role in a Clinton presidency. Maybe it's time to take her at her word and start imagining Bill and Hillary Clinton as the first First Couple of the post-feminist era.

Who is Hillary? On the stump, she sounds like Tammy Wynette, standing by her man's standard lines. But as she was quick to tell "60 Minutes," she's also much more. In her work and writing, she has revealed herself as the archetype of the modern lawyer as social and political activist. She is both a feminist and ardent liberal.

Strong convictions are surely to her credit. But especially because her husband likes to be all things to all voters, understanding the politics of Hillary is crucial to understanding what a Clinton presidency would really be like. Is her protean husband standing by his woman?

Ms. Clinton has staked out her views in speeches and articles that deserve more

Potomac Watch

By Paul A. Gigot

publicity. Liberal Garry Wills, who knows a fellow-traveler when he sees one, made a survey and came away dazzled in the New York Review of Books. His theme was amplified by a caricature portraying a giant Hillary behind a puny, faceless Bill.

Mr. Wills is thrilled because Ms. Clinton is a leading theorist of the "children's rights" movement. She has long promoted a legal doctrine that would declare children to be "competent" persons who would have wide standing to sue their parents.

"Decisions about motherhood and abortion, schooling, cosmetic surgery, treatment of venereal disease, or employment, and others where the decision or lack of one will significantly affect the child's future should not be made unilaterally by parents," she wrote in 1979.

This is more radical even than it sounds; if adopted by the Supreme Court, her theory would give the state a wedge to pry into family decisions. It is wild enough that even the intrusive Warren and Burger courts never went along. It's just what our lawsuit-happy society needs: Kids suing dad over a job at McDonald's.

Ms. Clinton even sides with the late liberal Justice William O. Douglas's lone dissent against a 1972 decision that let Amish parents keep their children out of public schools for religious reasons (*Wisconsin v. Yoder*).

This mentality informs her politics." She believes in—no, swears by—the virtues of government social work. Ms. Clinton, who has been her husband's education point-person in Arkansas, told an audience in 1990 at Memphis State University that the public "school has to become more of a center for coordinating and delivering services" to children. So schools that can't even teach English are somehow supposed to become surrogate parents, too.

It shouldn't surprise that Ms. Clinton also endorses expensive, publicly run day care. In 1990, even many liberals in Congress abandoned this sort of Great Society notion in favor of vouchers. But Ms. Clinton, as chair of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), lobbied hard for the nanny state. It's a safe bet that CDF's founder, Marian Wright Edelman, would end up in a Clinton cabinet. This sounds more like Sweden than like "reinventing government," a favorite Bill Clinton theme.

All of which helps explain why her husband, a "moderate" Southerner, was endorsed by so many Northern liberals over a truer believer such as Tom Harkin. They may wonder about Bill, but they're sure about Hillary. She is the essential glue of his unlikely Democratic coalition.

Jim Hightower, the tub-thumping Texas populist, says Bill Clinton's "instincts are good." But what really makes Mr. Hightower "comfortable are the good people around him, starting with Hillary," he says. "She's a real progressive. . . . I feel she'd be his conscience as president."



Hillary Clinton

Her allies—known to some as "Hillary-nistas"—have clout inside the Clinton campaign. Top strategist Mickey Kantor is a Los Angeles attorney who helped create LBJ's War on Poverty; he knows Hillary from their days together on the board of the Legal Services Corp., the subsidy tap for activist lawyers. Eli Segal, a Boston businessman and frequent adviser, has ties to both Hillary and Bill going back to the McGovern campaign. Judith Lichtman, of the Women's Legal Defense Fund, and a leader in the anti-Clarence Thomas crusade, is said by friends to be an adviser to Hillary.

Is it fair to link a candidate with the views of his spouse? In the post-feminist age, I think so. If a candidate's wife is now First Partner the way Hillary claims to be, her politics will shape his policy.

Betsy Wright, former chief of staff to Mr. Clinton, proudly asserts that, "She would make contributions to the policy choices of this country far beyond the ways First Ladies ever have." Hillary could be to a President Clinton what both Eleanor Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins were to FDR, confidante and power broker combined.

So why aren't our liberals and feminists crowding? Perhaps they're waiting for the day after the November election. Smart Republicans won't be so shy. If the Clintons win their party's nomination, there may be two races this autumn: Bill vs. George, and Hillary vs. Barbara.

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Will Hillary be held accountable?

DURING THE presidential campaign, Hillary Rodham Clinton said that if her husband were elected, we would also get her in a kind of two-for-one package; something like a co-president.

She has been true to her word by influencing the selection of many members of her husband's cabinet. But that's not all. Last week President-Elect Bill Clinton announced that his wife would sit in on cabinet meetings and would help make policy.

No Republican president would be allowed to give his wife such power. Recall the editorial and political outrage from Ronald Reagan's opponents when Nancy Reagan was said to be involved in certain personnel decisions, such as chief of staff. As for policy making, President Reagan was forced to repeatedly assure the public that his wife was not involved in making policy. Astrology, yes. Policy, no.

In announcing that Hillary Clinton will attend cabinet meetings, Bill Clinton said the reason was that "she knows more than the rest of us about a lot of things." Now his comment is either (a) condescending, or (b) it is sexist, like speaking of "the little woman," followed by a knowing wink of the eye, or (c) it is true — Hillary Clinton really *does* know more than the incoming cabinet and her husband, which is an incredible admission by a new president and a revelation that the public has been duped.

The issue is not influence. Every president's wife, every person's spouse, has and should have influence. Susan Faludi, writing in The New York Times, says of Hillary Clinton: "What galls her detractors

CAL THOMAS



isn't so much that she is independent — but that she enjoys it. She is doing something her predecessors didn't dare." And for good reason did they not dare to do it.

The issue is how much influence she will have and how the public will know which policies evolved from the elected president, and for which he, therefore, is to be held accountable, and which policies came from the mind of his unelected wife?

In other words, how will Hillary Clinton be held accountable?

In the Dec. 18 issue of The Wall Street Journal, reporter Michael Frisby writes about the designated chief of staff, Thomas (Mack) McLarty: "There are already questions about whether Mr. McLarty is knowledgeable enough about Washington to be effective in his job — but friends suggest it may well fall to Mrs. Clinton to supply whatever savvy Mr. McLarty may be lacking."

This is frightening stuff. We don't need a "shadow president," a type of Imelda Marcos pulling policy strings and running the government behind the scenes with no accountability to the people. At a minimum, Hillary Clinton should be subject to the same ethics laws

that apply to other staff members. If she is going to have more power than the cabinet, perhaps she should be confirmed to her advisory post by the Senate. She ought to frequently offer herself to be questioned by the press at public news conferences.

Arkansas has been the tryout state for the great national show that Hillary and Bill Clinton are about to open in Washington. One who observed their act closely offers a clue to what the activist and soon-to-be first adviser and co-president and her husband have in mind for the country.

Carole Baker of Little Rock, who describes herself as "an unpaid lobbyist at the Arkansas State Legislature," in a letter to the editor of Christianity Today magazine, wrote: "I have worked . . . to try to stop some of the programs and liberal agenda of Ms. Rodham and Mr. Clinton. Some of those programs — all attacks on the family and parental authority — were: school-based sex clinics with abortion referral [and] 3-year-olds [required to go to] kindergarten. . . . During Mr. Clinton's tenure as governor, we have dropped from 20th to 25th of the 28 states taking the same tests.

"I COULD WRITE a book about the battles we have had to fight at the state capitol because of philosophies held by the Clintons. She is far more ambitious than her husband."

All the more reason for her to be held accountable by the public and for us to have regular reports on her activities.

Cal Thomas writes a column syndicated by the Los Angeles Times.