

# *The K.F. Stone Weekly*

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



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## SEND IN THE CLOWNS (WITH APOLOGIES TO STEPHEN SONDHEIM)

*Isn't it rich?  
Are we a pair?  
Me here at last on the ground,  
You in the air.  
Send in the clowns.*

Within moments of learning that New Jersey Governor Chris Christie had endorsed Donald Trump for the Republican presidential nomination, the above lyrics from Stephen Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns" - the [Judy Collins version](#) - started ringing in my ears. Goodness knows the lyrics are shiveringly ironic, and in their own way, hauntingly prescient. For Christie - "The Mouth That Roared" -



is "at last on the ground," his presidential ambition shot down by Trump who, against all reason or logic is still "in the air." It wasn't that long ago that Christie was referring to Trump as an "entertainer in chief," and calling his new BFF's plan to temporarily ban Muslims from the United States "ridiculous." "That's all over,"

Christie told reporters on Friday in Texas, where Trump is hoping to defeat that state's Senator, Ted Cruz in the upcoming primary. Christie was quick to add that his decision to endorse Trump came down to "who is the best person to stop Hillary Clinton from getting inside the White House ever again."

*Isn't it bliss? Don't you approve?  
One who keeps tearing around  
One who can't move  
Where are the clowns?  
Send in the clowns.*

The scorn, ridicule and derision with which Trump's candidacy was met just a few months ago has turned into a mind-numbing case of *coulrophobia* - an irrational fear of clowns. Yes, without question, it's terribly easy to deride Trump for so many things:

- His bluster, bigotry and utter boorishness;
- His constant blather about being so incredibly successful when reminders of his epic failures - Trump University, Trump Mortgage, Trump Magazine, Trump Airlines, Trump Casinos, Trump Vodka - come to mind;
- His endorsements by such human excrement as the KKK's David Duke, France's most notorious right-wing troll, Jean-Marie Le Pen, reality TV star and flat-earth conspiracy theorist Tila Tequilla, Joe Arpaio, the self-proclaimed "toughest sheriff in America," and old Mama Grizzly herself, Sarah Palin. When questioned about Duke by CNN's Jake Tapper, Trump feigned ignorance of who the former K.K.K. head was - despite the fact that in 2000, when he ended his presidential campaign, Trump cited Duke's participation in the Reform Party as one reason he no longer wanted the party's nomination: At the time, [he was quoted](#) as saying "*The Reform Party now includes a Klansman, Mr. Duke, a neo-Nazi, Mr. Buchanan, and a communist, Ms. Fulani. This is not company I wish to keep.*"

Then there is his penchant for making all those outrageous shoot from the hip statements:

- "*I could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't lose any voters, okay? It's, like, incredible.*"
- "*When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're sending people that have lots of problems...they're bringing drugs, they're bringing crime. They're rapists.*"
- "*I don't think Ivanka would do that, although she does have a very nice figure. I've said if Ivanka weren't my daughter, perhaps I'd be dating her.*" (Donald Trump, when asked how he would react if Ivanka posed for Playboy)
- "*He's not a war hero. He's a war hero because he was captured. I like people that weren't captured.*" (Donald Trump on John McCain).

- *"It's hard for me to turn down money because that's what I've done in my whole life; I grab and grab and grab. You know I get greedy. I want money, money. Now we're going to get greedy for the United States – we're going to grab and grab and grab."*
- *"I love the poorly educated!"*

*Don't you love farce?  
My fault, I fear  
I thought that you'd want what I want  
Sorry, my dear*

And of course, Trump has reached new heights - or depths - in calling his political opponents every name in the book. He's accused them of being the biggest liars he's ever met; cowardly, stupid, unaccomplished and dishonest to the max. Needless to say, he is a major league master of both slander and libel who unbelievably, told a throng of adoring Texas admirers this past Friday that he wants to *"open up our libel laws so when [reporters] write purposely negative and horrible and false articles, we can sue them and win lots of money."* He also suggested that when he becomes president, media outlets like The New York Times and The Washington Post, - *"the most dishonest media outlets I've ever seen in my life,"* - will pay for their unfavorable coverage of his campaign. Such an overhaul of free-press laws would require serious alterations to the meaning of the First Amendment. But either Trump is unaware of that fact or simply does not care. Or, is this yet another rehearsed-to-appear-spontaneous skit in his clown act?

Frighteningly, the clown act isn't nearly as clownish as it seemed just a few months ago. Now, more and more people both inside and outside the political world are waking up to the fact that maybe - just maybe - this world-class con man is going to become the Republican nominee for president. And despite the fact that this would lead to what many political cognoscenti are calling "a political disaster of epic proportions for the Republican Party," it in no way gives Democrats a warm and cuddly feeling. Why? Well first, because it means that this year's presidential debates would be about as edifying and educational as a cock-fight (no pun intended), and second, that the rest of the world will likely see America as having lost both its mind and the right to be leader of the free world. Jean Marie Le Pen and Vladimir Putin to the contrary, most of the industrialized world - and a broad swath of the developing world - see in Mr. Trump another rudderless Berlusconi - a billionaire buffoon.

Both are older white men with a lot of wealth of dubious provenance. Both decided to enter the public arena after promising they would run their countries the way they run their companies. Both are openly misogynistic while claiming to love women, and both share a questionable sense of humor. They appeal to

what in Italy is referred to as *la pancia dell'elettorato*, "the belly of the electorate" - their gut reactions to the issues at hand.

*But where are the clowns  
There ought to be clowns  
Quick send in the clowns  
What a surprise,  
Who could foresee?*

For too long, the other Republican candidates - and the party itself - treated Trump with kid gloves, refusing to challenge or badmouth him. As of the other night, the long knives have finally become unsheathed; Cruz and Rubio are on the warpath. But is it too little too late? What can be done to stop Trump?

*What a surprise,  
Who could foresee?  
I'd come to feel about you  
What you felt about me?  
Why only now when I see  
That you've drifted away?  
What a surprise...  
What a cliché...*

Indeed, a question of tremendous importance. My guess is that the only one who can ultimately defeat Donald Trump is the clown himself. We've got to make it known that he hires illegal aliens at his resort in Palm Beach; that despite being worth more than anyone else in the race, he's ignorant of foreign policy, knows nothing about education, agriculture, science or the art of diplomacy; that he's far too much a one-man show in a theatre which demands - DEMANDS - a full cast and crew of professionals. The more he is challenged and demands made that he answer serious questions, the more his feet are held to the fire, the more likely it is that he will blow his top and say things which can never be taken back - will forever and a day be part of the visual record for everyone to see. And if those angry hateful statements are directed against either the first woman or the first Jew to run for POTUS, perhaps that will be at long last the straw that breaks the camel's back; the final indignity which sends him back to the primeval slime from whence he emerged. He is not simply beneath our contempt; he is a man whose only passions are himself and his delusions.

If it weren't for my great love for Stephen Sondheim and *A Little Night Music*, I might recommend that *Send in the Clowns* become the official song for the anti-Trump campaign.

But I won't, because this clown is anything but funny.

*Isn't it rich, isn't it queer  
Losing my timing this late in my career  
And where are the clowns  
Quick send in the clowns  
Don't bother, they're here*

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