

## The Gore coup attempt is already succeeding

by Edward Spannaus

Even though Congressional Republicans concede that, at this point in time, they do not have the 67 votes in the Senate necessary to remove President Bill Clinton from office, the coup d'état against the Presidency is relentlessly proceeding. Every day that the Senate "trial" drags on, and the President continues to be under this foreign-run assault, represents a day that the U.S. government is slipping away out from under the control of the Chief Executive and Commander-in-Chief. If the President cannot be legally removed, he can be humiliated and immobilized—and that is a major purpose of carrying the impeachment process on, as the world sinks deeper into financial collapse and strategic destabilization.

With the President under siege, foreign policy and military policy are being made and carried out by the Principals Committee—Vice President Al Gore and his allies such as Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defense Secretary William Cohen. "Co-President" Gore has likewise tried to assume control of domestic policy, and is putting forward a higher and higher profile within the administration. And the "permanent bureaucracy" of the Justice Department, State Department, and other agencies is reasserting its power.

The most immediate danger is that, with the Principals Committee making and conducting policy behind the President's back, the United States is heading toward a new and dangerous confrontation in the Middle East around Iraq (although the comments by Gen. Anthony Zinni, the head of the U.S. Central Command, in Senate hearings on Jan. 28, represent the beginning of an open fight over Iraq policy), and relations with Russia and China are rapidly deteriorating. If this is not quickly stopped and reversed, the damage may be irreparable.

Make no mistake, the architects of the coup know exactly what they are doing.

### The coup-makers speak

During the Senate impeachment trial on Jan. 16, House manager Rep. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) declared that Al Gore is waiting to take over as President, and called for the Senate to let him do it. Graham concluded:

"The Vice President will be waiting outside the doors of this chamber. Our constitutional system is simple and it's genius all at the same time. If that Vice President is asked to come in and assume the mantle of chief executive officer of the land, chief law enforcement officer of the land, it will be tough, it will be painful, but we will survive and we will be better for it."

And to hear it even more directly from the horse's mouth, listen to the comments of Emmett Tyrrell, the editor of the London-linked *American Spectator* magazine, which launched the "Troopergate" scandals at the end of 1993, which was pushing the impeachment of President Clinton by the end of 1996. Tyrrell was speaking on C-SPAN's "Washington Journal" on Jan. 22:

"I think one of the under-appreciated people in all this is, oddly enough, Al Gore. He must go home at night feeling rather bad thinking the Democratic Party wouldn't welcome him as President of the United States. He certainly would be a much steadier hand at the helm today than Bill Clinton is, and the notion that there's going to be some sort of chaos if Al Gore steps in as President of the United States. . . . Was there chaos when Gerald Ford stepped in as President of the United States? I don't think so. So, Al, I just want you to know, I'm for you and if you're President tomorrow, I'll rest easy with you at the helm."

This is also how it is increasingly being seen abroad. During an ABC "Nightline" discussion on Jan. 27 with the Washington correspondents of various foreign news media, host

Ted Koppel asked Claus Kleber, the correspondent for Germany's ARD television network, what do the Germans have the most trouble understanding about the impeachment? Kleber said that at first it looked like just a sex scandal. "But now, since it drags on so much, the emphasis for us, of our viewers, goes onto the political side. Why do the Republicans push for President Gore? This is the question that is always asked."

## **GOP self-destruction**

Perhaps the strongest indication that this operation is being run from outside—certainly from outside the United States Senate, and in some respects from outside the United States itself—is that that Republicans are so obstinately persisting in what many of them realize is a suicidal course.

In his widely syndicated column, conservative political commentator Robert Novak wrote that Republican Senators are caught between two forces: the House Managers who are insisting on bringing witnesses onto the Senate floor, and, on the other hand, "fear that the Grand Old Party is sinking into oblivion under the weight of the impeachment case." Novak cited private polls which show the Republicans have lost 8 to 12 percentage points to the Democrats since the November elections, in large part because of the impeachment. "The panic in GOP ranks cannot be exaggerated," Novak declared.

Yet, they persist. Since the Jan. 27 vote on dismissal of the case, in which 44 Senators voted to dismiss the Articles of Impeachment without further proceedings, it has been clear that, barring a drastic shift, the Republicans will not be able to muster the two-thirds necessary to convict and remove the President. Yet, the next day, the Republicans rammed through, on party-line votes, procedures to take testimony from witnesses demanded by the House Managers, leaving the door ajar for still more after that.

"The Managers' hope to call more witnesses is simply a product of their desire, their hope, their prayer that something will come to rescue their case," White House counsel David Kendall said. "I think it comes from desperation."

It is indeed quite obvious that the House Managers, and those pulling their strings behind the stage, are desperately hoping that something new will somehow emerge, that can change the situation in their favor.

This quality of desperation became obvious on Jan. 22-23, when it was disclosed that Rep. Henry Hyde (R-Ill.), the leader of the Managers, was secretly working with independent counsel Kenneth Starr to force Monica Lewinsky to appear, to be interrogated by the Managers.

The Managers had already attempted to obtain an interview with Lewinsky, but her attorneys had refused. Hyde then went to Starr and asked him to intervene. On Jan. 21, Robert Bittman, one of Starr's deputies, contacted Lewinsky's lawyers and demanded that Lewinsky meet with the Managers. Lewinsky's lawyers still refused.

Starr then filed a secret motion with Chief Judge Norma

Holloway Johnson of the U.S. District Court in Washington, asking her to order Lewinsky to be debriefed by the House Managers. As the Senate trial was under way on the morning of Jan. 23, Chief Judge Johnson ordered that Lewinsky appear to be questioned by House Managers, with the presence of prosecutors from Starr's office.

The actions of Hyde and Starr became the leading topic of debate, and White House counsel Charles Ruff charged that Hyde and the Managers were using the threat of jailing to force Lewinsky to talk to them, since Starr can prosecute and jail her if he claims she is not "cooperating" with his office under her immunity agreement.

Starr's unwarranted (and, as Sen. Tom Harkin [D-Iowa] charged, unconstitutional) intervention into the Senate trial served two useful purposes. First, it broke the facade of "bipartisanship" which had dominated the Senate proceedings since the procedural agreement of Jan. 8. ("Bipartisanship" simply meant that most Democrats refused to denounce the Senate trial for the charade it is.) Second, it demonstrated that Starr and the "Get Clinton" cabal surrounding him are still lurking in the shadows, and that they intend to still be running the show no matter what ultimately happens in the Senate.

This point was forcefully made by Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.) on NBC's "Meet the Press" on Jan. 24, as he argued that the case against President Clinton should be dismissed. "This political charade has gone on long enough," Hollings said. "It started four and a half years ago, \$50 million, old Kenneth Starr, the most starkly partisan prosecution harassment."

"You know, in the very early days, we declared in the Declaration of Independence against sending hither swarms of officers to harass our people and eating up their substance. That's happened for four and a half years. They've gone from Vince Foster to Whitewater, Filegate, Travelgate, any and every kind of challenge they've made. Now they're trying misuse the impeachment laws."

During the week, as the Senate moved to take testimony and gather additional evidence, the White House was coming under heavy pressure to back off from its demand for full access to all of the material given by Starr to the House Judiciary Committee, including the "secret evidence" which has been trumpeted by some of the House Managers. By Jan. 28, White House spokesman Joe Lockhart was conceding that the White House might not be able to obtain the discovery it was demanding. "Every time we turn around, the rules get changed," Lockhart complained.

With removal fading away as a likelihood, the President's adversaries began cooking up a new constitutional monstrosity: conviction without removal. Under the guise of a "finding of fact," or some variety of "censure," the President would remain under a cloud of condemnation for the remainder of this term, while Vice President Gore, the Principals Committee, and the permanent bureaucracy run the U.S. government.