POLITICAL CREDIBILITY

THE CANDIDATE vs THE PRESIDENT

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DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to explore the political credibility of Bill Clinton through an analysis of the differences between the economic plan he proposed as a candidate running for office and the economic plan he submitted to Congress as the President.

This analysis will use the theories of persuasion, (both Aristotle's and modern), theories of propaganda, routes of persuasion, heuristics, and the theory of cheating and deception.

II. OVERVIEW

"THE ECONOMY, STUPID"

As part of his political campaign for the Presidency of the United States Bill Clinton criss-crossed America, stopped in manytoens and cities, and gave many speeches. Most of his speeches dealt with the economy of the United States--what he believed was wrong with it and what he planned to do about it if he were elected president.

The economy was his central theme even to the point of using the phrase, "The Economy, Stupid", as the watch words of his campaign. He used this phrase to keep his staff, as well as himself, ever mindful that the economy was the thing most Americans worried about; and, what most Americans believed George Bush didn't understand, or, as some thought, didn't care about. His dogged pursuit of this theme is what many say won him the election and the Presidency.

III. ANALYSIS

According to Aristotle's theory there are three facets to persuasion "...the source (ethos), the message (logos), and the emotion of the audience (pathos)." (Pratkanis and Aronson, p. 18). Modern theory of persuasion, on the other hand, makes use of the psychological principles developed in learning theory, cognitive approaches, and psychoanalysis. Routes of persuasion are either peripheral or central. The theory of cheating and deception involves the distortion of reality by hiding the real and showing the false. And finally, heuristics are "...a guide in the study or solution of a problem." (Webster, p. 580).

The political credibility of Bill Clinton is based on his ability to persuade his audience, first as a candidate and, second as President that the enactment of his economic plan is essential for the American economy to recover. Therefore, the analysis of Bill Clinton's credibility will focus on his economic plan; what he offered and who his audience was when he was a candidate, and what he offered and who his audience is now that he is the President. The analysis will be done in light of the above theories and definitions.

A. The Source - Candidate and President

The first of Aristo three facets of persuasion deals with the source or ethos of the message. Bill Clinton, as either candidate or President, is the communicator, the

source if you will, of his message on the economy.

In order to begin to understand whether Bill Clinton and his message are credible we first need to understand who Bill Clinton is and "where he is coming from". We need to understand whether he has been able to present himself, as Aristotle recommended, as a good person and one who can be trusted, politically.

In their March 30, 1992 issue U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT, explored this very idea in an article entitled "The Making Of Bill Clinton" (See Atch-A for the complete article). In this article it asked the question, "Is he a principled agent for change, or a hollow man who will do anything to fulfill his lifelong dream?" and went on to answer it by saying, "One way to settle it is to look at the forces that shaped him."

What were the forces that shaped Bill Clinton and more importantly who is the "Bill Clinton" that emerged from these forces? The article pointed out some of the more important forces as being:

a. The circumstances of his early life; the loss of his father, his rearing by his grandparents, his facing down an abusive, alcoholic stepfather.

> "He lived life in the raw," says Lee Williams, who gave Clinton one of his first jobs. But his belief system was formed by a softer, more spiritual side to his family life. Young Bill regularly attended Baptist services, and a big Bible was always on display at home. "He believes deeply in the parables, wanting people to realize their potential, that the purpose of life is service to others." says Thomas Caplan, an old college friend. (p. 28).

b. His energy, drive, ambition, and cultivation of

influential people.

> From his earliest days, Clinton was on the make. He held so many class offices in high school that he wasn't allowed to seek a particular job his senior year. He landed a handshake from President John Kennedy when he was a 1963 delegate to Boy's Nation. (p. 28).
>
> To critics like John Brummett, editor of Arkansas Times magazine, Clinton is a "political robot, who's been running for president all his life". (p. 28).
>
> When he went to Georgetown, Clinton applied, with typical elan, for a job in Fulbright's Capitol Hill office. Lee Williams, Fulbright's chief aide, remembers that he had recommendations from a law professor, a state judge and a public service commissioner--testimony to his precocious cultivation of influential people. (p. 28).
>
> ...Clinton and his wife kept up their vast national network. "They have the world's largest mental rolodex," says Mickey Kantor, a friend and advisor. (p. 34).

c. His formal education: a) Georgetown, where he studied foreign policy, b) Oxford, as a Rhodes scholar, and, c) Yale Law School.

> ...he was free to pursue his real ambition, Yale Law School.... If Oxford made Clinton a candidate for the power elite, Yale made him a card-carrying member. (p. 30).

d. His heroes: Eisenhower, the Kennedy's John and Bobby, and his role model, Senator Fulbright.

> "He [Fulbright] made me believe that there was no intrinsic conflict between being an intellectual and being a public official," Clinton says. (p. 28).

e. His wife Hillary Rodham-Clinton.

> ...perhaps his most important political advisor. (p. 31).

f. His defeat for re-election as Governor of Arkansas in 1980.

> In 1980, he was defeated for re-election, an event many friends consider to be the most traumatic of his life. (p. 31).
>
> "from that moment on," says Paul Greenberg, an editorial writer for the Pine Bluff (Ark.) Commercial, "he seems to have resolved not to offend anybody again. Not a single voter." (p. 31).
>
> Clinton ran again in 1982 as a changed consensus-seeking candidate (p. 34). ...Clinton carefully walked lines that leave many in doubt about where he really stands.
>
> So far, in this campaign, as in his life, Clinton has shown repeatedly his ability to adjust to new realities... (p. 34).
>
> Clinton has made himself into a masterful politician... (p. 34).

In the opinion of the author, the Bill Clinton that emerged from these forces, that so strongly influenced his life, is: ambitious, intelligent, educated, resourceful, and most of all political; and, political is the operative word. For it defines candidate and President Bill Clinton as no other single word can.

If one defines politics as the art of persuasion and compromise, then one can define Bill Clinton as a calculating master of the art. His critics may say this is immoral and calculating. "But the candidate [Clinton] sees it differently. 'There's nothing immoral in being politically calculating', he told U.S. News last week. 'But you don't want the calculation to overwhelm everything else'." (U.S. News & World Report 30 Mar 92, p. 28).

As to whether he is a good person and one who is politically trustworthy (not withstanding his affair with Gennifer Flowers and his questionable attempt to avoid the Vietnam-era draft) is not a conclusion that can be arrived at simply or easily.

If he were an "ordinary person" which he is not, for no man or women who is President of the United States is an "ordinary person" in the sense of the "man in the street", I would say that he is a good man and one that can be trusted in most matters, but maybe not all.

However, the arena that his credibility is to be judged is the political arena where the rules for credibility are not quite the same as they are in the arena of ordinary men and women. Political credibility equates to political viability. If one loses one's political credibility, particularly before an election, ones loses one's political viability and the election as well. To determine Clinton's political credibility we must explore his political message and his political audience.

B. The Candidate's Message and Audience

The Message (Logos)

Candidate Bill Clinton's political message, i. e., his plan for the economy of the United States, was heard in his campaign speeches where he delivered it in a "barnstorming" fashion from one end of America to the other. It began as a simple message that said the economy is what is wrong with

America and I can fix it and George Bush can't. As time progressed he developed a plan that included the: deficit, income taxes, social security, and energy taxes.

Clinton's pre-election economic plan, coupled with Bush's real or imagined ineptness with the economy and Perot's entry into the presidential race, is what enabled Clinton to be elected. The pre-election economic plan that he touted consisted of the following major points:

1. **The Deficit** - Reduce the deficit from $296 billion in 1993 to $141 billion in 1996 or 53% in 3 years.
2. **Income Taxes** - Change the tax rate from 31% to 36% for couples with adjusted incomes of $200,000 or more and $150,000 for individuals. Plus a 10% surcharge on the federal income tax of millionaires.
3. **Tax Cuts** - Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit for the working poor and offer a choice between a $300 per couple tax cut or a $300 per child tax credit to the middle-class.
4. **Social Security** - Opposition to means-testing and freezing of cost-of-living adjustments. Consideration to taxing a larger portion of benefits for higher income recipients.
5. **Energy Taxes** - opposition to a sharp increase in gasoline taxes due to its' impact on the middle class.

The Audience (Pathos)

The audience to which Clinton delivered his economic message was no less than the voting population of America. An audience that had experienced a long and painful recession, an audience that had seen America's economy fall behind that of Japan and Germany, an audience that was experiencing 7.1% unemployment nationwide, and an audience tired of policies that "...benefited the richest 1 percent of the population at the expense of nearly everyone else." (U.S. News & World Report , March 30, 1993, p.37). In short an audience that was pumped, primed, and ready for change.

Clinton, presumably knowing as did Bush and Perot, that most people are cognitive misers packaged his economic message to use periperal rather than cognitive routes of persuasion. This allowed him to take full advantage of what is refer to as

> ...the essential delimma of modern democracy. On the one hand, we, as a society, value persuasion; our government is based on the belief that free speech and discussion and exchanges of ideas can lead to fairer and better decision making. On the other hand, as cognitive misers we often do not participate fully in this discussion, relying instead not on careful thought and scrutiny of a message, but on simplistic persuasion devices and limited reasoning. (Pratkanis & Aronson, p. 31).

Delivered this way Clinton's message proved to be both persuasive and credible. How persuasive and credible was the message? Persuasive and credible enough to elect him President by giving him 43% of the popular vote, which in turn gave him 83% of the electoral votes, and the strongest showing of any Democratic challenger since Franklin Delano

Roosevelt in 1932.

Why was it so persuasive and credible? One reason is that it contained all the key elements associated with effective propaganda and modern learning theory. "According to learning theory, a persuasive message is persuasive when it is learned and accepted by the recipient; propaganda must be seen, understood, learned, remembered, and acted upon". (Pratkanis & Aronson, p. 22).

An analysis of Clinton's message in light of learning theory, modern propaganda, and Carl Hovlind's learning model would suggest that his economic message was persuasive and, therefore, credible because:

a. the message attracted the voters attention.

b. the voters understood and comprehended the arguments, or at least they thought they did.

c. the voters accepted the arguments as being true.

d. the voters acted on this knowledge because there was an incentive to do so--the heuristic of a better economic future.

C. The President's Message and Audience

The Message (Logos)

Shortly after candidate Clinton's election to the Presidency, on November 3, 1992, and before his State of the Union Message to Congress on February 17, 1993 his economic plan under went an evolution, some might say a metamorphosis.

So different was the post-election plan from the pre-

election plan that shortly after his inauguration Clinton began to prepare the American people, and the Congress, for the differences and to gain their acceptance of his new plan. He did this through a series of speeches, radio addresses, a televised town meeting (in Southfield, Mich) and numerous meetings with Democratic members of both Houses.

On Sunday, February 14, 1993 The Philadelphia Inquirer's headline read:

" CLINTON READIES A NATIONAL PUSH ON ECONOMIC PLAN "

" As he continued to lobby congressional Democrats, he also prepared to sell the program to the public."

On Monday, February 15, 1993 The New York Times carried the following headlines:

" WHITE HOUSE HONES ALL-OUT CAMPAIGN TO SELL SACRIFICE PREVIEW SET FOR TONIGHT "

Monday evening (Feb 15) President Clinton went on national television and spoke about the economy and "shared sacrifice" as a prelude to his State of the Union address set for the 17th.

Bill Clinton had begun his campaign to convince Congress and the American voters that his new economic plan was politically acceptable. His approach was a classical use of political propaganda for it followed the definition of political propaganda, as defined by Jacques Ellul, to a tee.

> It [political propaganda] involves techniques of influence employed by a government, a party, an administration, [or] a pressure group, with a view to changing the behavior of the public. The choice of methods used is deliberate and calculated; the desired

goals are clearly distinguished and quite precise, though generally limited.

...Propaganda as it is traditionally known implies an attempt to spread an ideology through the mass media of communications in order to lead the public to accept some political or economic structure or to participate in some action.

...Ideology is disseminated for the purpose of making various political acts acceptable to the people. (Ellul, p. 62 & 63).

At 9:00 PM on Wednesday, February 17, 1993 President Bill Clinton addressed a joint session of Congress and delivered his first State of the Union address. Within that address he outlined the major points of his post-election economic plan as follows:

1. **The Deficit** - Cut the now projected deficit of $346 billion to $206 billion by 1997 or 40% in 4 years (previous plan was 53% in 3 years).
2. **Income Taxes** - Raise rates from 31% to 36% for couples with adjusted incomes of $180,000 and individuals with adjusted incomes over $140,000. (previous plan was $200,000 and $150,000)
3. **Tax Cuts** - Increase the Earned Income Tax Credit and scrap the middle income tax cuts.
4. **Social Security** - Increase the taxable portion of benefits from 50% to 85% for individuals with incomes over $25,000 and couples over $32,000. Rejection of a freeze on cost-of-living adjustments.
5. **Energy Tax** - Imposition of a fuel tax on each fuel's energy content not just gasoline.

What happened between the time that Bill Clinton was a

candidate running for the Presidency and when he delivered his State of the Union Address? Had the economy changed? Clinton knew last summer that the deficit would be higher. "But the warning signs about higher deficits were evident last summer when the administration and the CBO [Congressional Budget Office] both issued gloomy forecasts. The warnings apparently caught Clinton's eye because he told Business Week magazine in July: 'When I began the campaign, the projected deficit was $250 billion. Now, its up to $400 billion.' " (The Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb 18, 1993, pg. A10). Was he privied to different information now that he was the President; or, was this his plan all along? Had he practiced the art of deception as a candidate by showing the American public a false economic plan while hiding the real, if so why? Had he told the "noble lie", believing what he was doing was for the good of the American people and the economic problem was too complex for them to understand? Many questions, few answers. Without being the proverbial "fly on the wall" it is near impossible for the ordinary citizen to be able to know for sure.

What is known for sure is that the new plan broke many important campaign promises. On the morning after, (Feb, 18) newspapers across the land carried banner headlines. The Philadelphia Inquirer's read:

" CLINTON ASKS NEARLY $500 BILLION IN HIGHER TAXES AND SPENDING CUTS "

The Wall Street Journal's headline read:

" A PLAN FOR CHANGE

**Clinton Stresses Taxes
Over Spending Cuts
In Attack On Deficit "**

The newspapers dealt with the credibility issues, resulting from Clinton's broken promises, in articles separate from those dealing with the new economic plan. Charles Green, of The Philadelphia Inquirer, wrote an article headlined:

" What candidate said then, and what President says now " in which he cited ten differences between what candidate Clinton vowed, proposed, or promised and what President Clinton wants, proposed, or said on the same subjects (See Atch-B for entire article). The same issue also carried an article quoting Clinton from the campaign trail and matching those words to what he proposed in his State of the Union Address (See Atch-C). The Wall Street Journal carried similar articles the same day headlined: (See Atch-D and E for complete articles)

**"Important Campaign Promises
Are left in Dust by President "**

**"A Plan That's Tailored
To Suit the Democrats "**

The second article is the forecast, if one were to read between the lines, of what would happen to the Presidents credibility. Initially and on the surface it appeared that Clinton's credibility was headed for a tail spinning nose dive, but it didn't. In order to understand why it didn't we need to look once again at who the audience was that Clinton was speaking to when he proposed his post-election economic

plan.

The Audience (Pathos)

The audience to which President Clinton addressed his new economic plan to was no longer only the American voting public but now included the Congress of the United States. The President knew that if he were to continue to have credibility with the voters he also had to have credibility with Congress. He would have that credibility if he could convince Congress, a Congress that was overwhelmingly Democratic, that his new economic plan was politically acceptable to them. If it were not acceptable to the voters they in turn could elect new members of Congress which would presumably erode the President's power base--but not for two more years. Clinton was being politically calculating once again.

The President had done his homework and calculated how to get his new plan through Congress.

> By tailoring his economic program so closely to the interests of Democratic constituencies, President Clinton has staked his fortunes on party discipline and reduced his margin for error on Capitol Hill. (Harwood & Rogers, Wall Street Journal, Feb 18, 1993, pg. A11).

He had presented the new plan, now referred to as "Clintonomics", to the Congress and to the American people. His credibility would rest once again on a vote. However, this time the voters were the members of Congress.

Before the voting took place a debate would insue over the issues in the plan. The debate being the means whereby

each of the opposing sides has the opportunity to persuade the other as to the acceptability/credibility of their side of the issue. The Congress of the United States wholly embraces the idea set forth by the sophist Protagoras "...that persuasion happened best when all parties concerned knew both sides of the issue at hand. By juxtaposing one argument against an opposing one, the issue is made clear; the advantages and disadvantages of the available course of action are revealed." (Pratkanis & Aronson, p. 150).

Just how well the advantages and disadvantages were made clear is, like the issues, debatable. In a poll conducted by U.S. News & World Report and reported in their March 1, 1993 issue "...shows that the public is quite divided about the plan. Right now there is an even split among those who characterize Clinton's plan, especially the higher taxes on the middle class, as an act of leadership (43 percent) and those who say it was a broken promise (44 percent)." (See Atch-F for complete poll results).

However, this debate was not being conducted among the voters of America, but among the members of Congress. On Friday March 19, 1993 The Philadelphia Inquirer reported:

> A major part of President Clinton's economic plan sailed through the House last night in a virtual party-line vote.
> The vote for the $1.5 trillion budget resolution for the next fiscal year was 243-183, with all Republicans opposing the plan, along with 11 Democrats.

The Democratic House of Representatives had given Clinton a 57% to 43% vote on his budget plan and his credibility. His

plan and credibility faired a little worse in the Senate when it approved the budget plan by only a 54 to 45 vote. Since then Republicans have held the economic stimulus portion of the plan captive through the use of a filibuster and are forcing the President to compromise.

Where will his credibility go, up, down, remain the same? Who's to say? None of us are clairvoyant enough to predict the future.

IV. CONCLUSION

As a politician, President Clinton's credibility is the measure of his political credibility and is based on his ability to persuade and compromise. As a candidate Bill Clinton spoke to the people's desire for change; as the President Bill Clinton speaks to a Democratic Congress's desire to serve their own constituencies, even at the cost of anothers constituency. As of late April 1993 his credibility is running more or less around 50% based on a Gallup poll completed for Newsweek. That's down from 58% at the end of February 1993, based on the same poll. As time goes by and issues come and go I dare say that his credibility will wax and wane. However, if Bill Clinton expects to gain the White House in '96 his credibility pertaining to domestic issues had better increase and remain high or his first audience, the American voters, will take great delight in seeing, like Mr. Bush, that his first term as President is his only term as President.

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ATTACHMENT - A

U.S. News & World Report Article

"The Making of Bill Clinton"

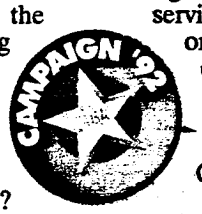
COVER STORY

THE MAKING OF BILL CLINTON

The argument rages: Is he a principled agent for change or a hollow man who will do anything to fulfill his lifelong dream? One way to settle it is to look at the forces that shaped him

Carolyn Staley, one of Bill Clinton's oldest friends, used to make it a point in high school to look for a certain kind of greeting card for him. "I'd choose anything with a White House on it," she says. "Anything that I saw that was presidential, I'd think of Bill."

Many of his friends—and not a few foes—have long sensed the ambition that drives Bill Clinton. Now that his unrelenting persistence has brought the 45-year-old to the brink of being the first baby boomer to win the Democratic nomination for president, the argument rages: Is he a principled agent for change, or a hollow man who will do anything to fulfill his lifelong dream?



To critics like John Brummett, editor of *Arkansas Times* magazine, Clinton is "a political robot, who's been running for president all his life." But the candidate sees it differently. "There's nothing immoral in being politically calculating," he told *U.S. News* last week. "But you don't want the calculation to overwhelm everything else." As the nation decides whether it can trust Clinton, it will be measuring whether his calculation has, in fact, overwhelmed his conscience.

Clinton's will to succeed was nursed in the hellish circumstances of his early years—his father's death before his birth, his rearing by grandparents who stepped in when his mother left to pursue her education and his courage in facing down an abusive, alcoholic stepfather's threats to his mother. "He lived life in the raw," says Lee Williams, who gave Clinton one of his first jobs. But his belief system was formed by a softer, more spiritual side to his family life. Young Bill regularly attended Baptist services, and a big Bible was always on display at home. "He believes deeply in the parables, wanting people to realize their potential, that the purpose of life is service to others," says Thomas Caplan, an old college friend.

From his earliest days, Clinton was on the make. He held so many class offices in high school that he wasn't allowed to seek a particular job his senior year. He landed a handshake from President John Kennedy when he was a 1963 delegate to Boys' Nation. And he caught such a case of Potomac fever that he went to Georgetown University to study foreign policy. All the while, he was looking for heroes, gravitating first to Dwight Eisenhower—the "father figure," he calls him—and later to the brothers Kennedy. But it was his fellow Arkansan, former Sen. J. William Fulbright, who became Clinton's real role model.

Friends from that time say Clinton had an "inferiority complex" about his home state, with its history of economic deprivation and racial intolerance, and Fulbright—the august chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and a progressive on racial issues—made him feel proud of his origins. "He made me believe that there was no intrinsic conflict between being an intellectual and being a public official," Clinton says. Adds Caplan: "People always knew where Bill was from. He was not only from a place, but from a place that he loved." Instead of dismaying him, the South's racial problems actually drew Clinton back home. "To him, that was the challenge," says Thomas Williamson, a black Washington lawyer and a fellow Rhodes scholar.

Agents of influence. When he went to Georgetown, Clinton applied, with typical élan, for a job in Fulbright's Capitol Hill office. Lee Williams, Fulbright's chief aide, remembers that he had recommendations from a law professor, a state judge and a public-service commissioner—testimony to his precocious cultivation of influential people. Williams was so impressed he called young Clinton and offered him a choice: a full-time job paying $5,000 a year or a part-time job worth $3,000. Even then, the man politi-

cal enemies later named "Slick Willie" knew how to frame an artful response: "I'll take two part-time jobs," Williams recalls Clinton's saying. He got them.

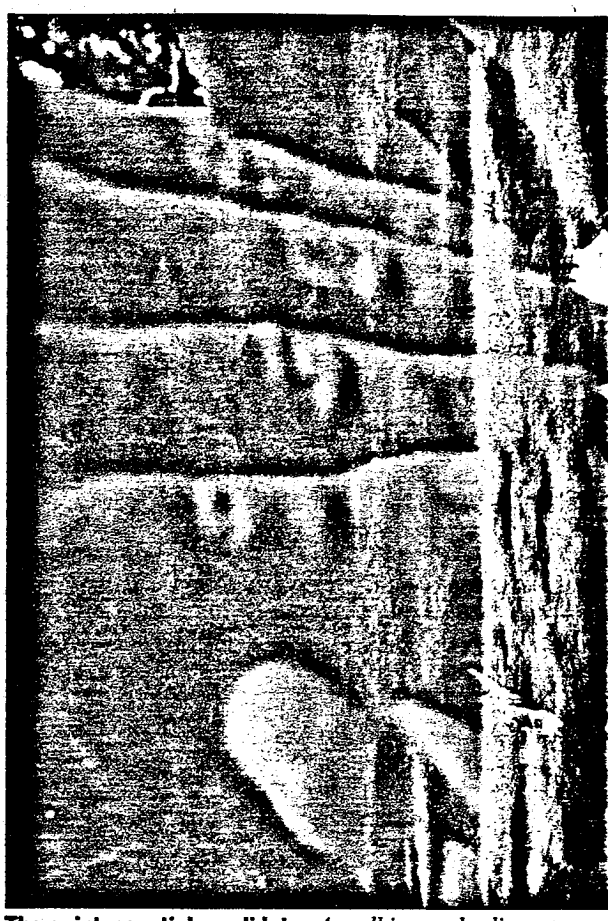
Clinton's opposition to the Vietnam War began while he was working for Fulbright, perhaps the most influential early critic of America's Vietnam involvement. The student spent many of his days attending hearings, clipping papers and absorbing the increasingly strident debate over the war.

Like Fulbright, Clinton won a Rhodes scholarship, an opening to a much broader universe of contacts and aspirations. At Oxford, he was drawn into the orbit of many bright young minds—future writers, academics and politicians—who remain close friends and advisers to this day. Then, as now, Clinton was renowned for his physical and intellectual energy. He slept only a few hours a night, catching quick naps during the day. Richard Stearns, now a Massachusetts judge, remembers refusing to let his friend drive anywhere: "I was always afraid he'd see a nice stretch of highway and decide to doze off."

Matters of principle. But the privilege of Clinton's British experience also intensified his anguish over the war. Brooke Shearer, a friend from that time, has recently unearthed some notes Clinton wrote then in which he agonized over the conflict between his duty to his country and his commitment to his antiwar principles. For Clinton, the debate was especially hard, because the Southerners he hoped to lead tended to support the war—and to revile those who didn't. Says Clinton: "I was a World War II kid. I grew up on John Wayne movies, and I was having all these terrible conflicts over the war." At the same time, Clinton's now-famous letter on the draft shows he was always considering the potential conflict between his moral impulses and his political future.

During that tormenting time, Clinton seems to have had one of his few moments of doubt about politics. Another Rhodes scholar friend, Darryl Gless, accompanied Clinton in 1969 to an Oxford speech by Allard Lowenstein, an American antiwar leader and political activist. The speech upset Clinton because it seemed to suggest that there were irreconcilable differences between his antiwar beliefs and his political dreams. He eventually decided to go back to face his draft board, thinking he would wind up at the University of Arkansas Law School in the Reserve Officers Training Corps.

Stearns has found a letter, written in September 1969, before Clinton returned to Oxford for his second year, in which Clinton talks about "looking forward" to law school and the political benefits a local degree might bring. In the letter, Stearns adds, Clinton also expresses "how guilty he felt" about trying to avoid the draft. Soon thereafter, Clinton reversed course, dropping the ROTC commitment and making himself eligible for the draft. That December, after pulling a high draft lottery number, he was free to pursue his real ambition, Yale Law School, which he entered in the fall of 1970.



The quintessential candidate. *A walking embodiment*

If Oxford made Clinton a candidate for the power elite, Yale made him a card-carrying member. While he was in New Haven, he joined the antiwar insurgency Senate campaign of Joseph Duffey. After Duffey's defeat, most of his campaign aides signed up with front-running presidential candidate Edmund Muskie. But Clinton—still driven by his antiwar feelings—joined Sen. George McGovern's camp. Clinton

STRONG DEFENSE

'I do have core principles'

Last week, just hours after he learned Paul Tsongas had pulled out of the race, Democratic front-runner Bill Clinton talked with *U.S. News*'s Donald Baer in Hartford, Conn. Excerpts:

■ **Hillary.** I think she really feels badly [her comments about staying home and baking cookies] were read [as insensitive]. What she was saying is she resented Jerry Brown or anybody else trying to force her to make those choices on how the role of a first lady in the state or a nation might be defined. The way the remarks were read was as a slam at women who chose to be homemakers and mothers. And she did not mean it that way, but I think she would concede that they could be read that way. I believe and she believes that the most important job in society today is child rearing. I've seen her tell young women who were on the professional track in law school, "If your mother stayed home, honor that." Of all the things that have happened in

PORTER GIFFORD—GAMMA/LIAISON

Crowd pleaser. *"We need changes."*

KEVIN HORAN FOR USN&WR

of the American meritocracy, he developed a long-lasting case of Potomac fever.

helped run McGovern's campaign in Texas, expanding, as always, his circle of contacts and showing particular facility in coping with the messy to and fro of the campaign. "I remember thinking," says author Taylor Branch, who also worked for McGovern, "one of his gifts in politics was that he absorbed disappointments well."

Homing instinct. At Yale, too, Clinton met Hillary Rodham, who would become his wife and perhaps his most important political adviser. He worried at the time about whether she would share his determination to go back to Arkansas. "I tried to run her off a few times," Clinton says. "When I realized I was falling in love with her, I was so worried about it because I knew I had to go home." So great was his homing instinct by this point that he actually passed up a chance to work on the congressional staff that prepared impeachment charges against Richard Nixon. Instead, he went back to Arkansas in 1973 to begin his path to power.

In its original version, Clinton's political map ran through Capitol Hill, not to the governor's mansion. Barely a year back in the state, he ran for Congress in 1974, losing to a longtime incumbent. With Congress not an option, and influenced by his new wife's interests in education and child care, he turned his attention to state office. In 1976, he was elected attorney general, and two years later, at age 32, became governor. It was all so fast and disorienting that his friend Derek Shearer remembers visiting the Clintons on their first night in the governor's house: "We were kind of roaming around this giant, antebellum mansion. We were eating chocolate-chip cookies and sort of saying, 'Are we really all here?' "

Not for long, it turned out. Clinton tackled the job with his legendary energy, taking on timber and utility interests, inundating the legislature with proposals, bringing in bearded, out-of-state friends as advisers and generally offending large segments of the state. In 1980, he was defeated for re-election, an event many friends consider to be the most traumatic of his life.

Carefully analyzing his failure, he concluded that he had tried to do too much, too soon, with too many outside advisers. Says his friend Thomas Williamson: "He pulled back from believing that trying to come up with the best and the brightest from around the country would be well accepted in Arkansas." Others interpreted his transformation less benignly. "From that moment on," says Paul Greenberg, an editorial writer for the *Pine Bluff* (Ark.) *Commercial*, "he seems to have resolved not to offend anybody again. Not a single voter." After a private

this campaign, I think that's among the saddest for me because the minute I read it, I thought, "People are going to think something that is different from what she has preached for a decade."

■ **Democrats in Congress.** It ought to be easy for me to avoid being tarred with them, since I have said we need some changes. We need to limit the contribution of [political action committees], to limit the cost of congressional campaigns, to open the airwaves to generate competition, to end pay raises and perks until the pay of ordinary Americans starts to go up again. Part of the problem with Congress is the direct result of not being engaged in the great work of the nation. There is no driving presidential vision which occupies [Congress's] energies. We've turned it into a drab place of contesting interest groups over minor matters because there is no president who says, "This is the agenda; go get it."

■ **Ambition.** You know, we're now living in a time where ambition is a bad thing. So people who have it go to extraordinary lengths to mask it, which I think is less honorable than just admitting that you believe in the value of public service and you want to be a part of it. This whole business about I had this presidential thing all worked out [is false]. I didn't know if anybody from Arkansas could ever be elected president.

I do have core principles, and I do my best to live by them. I don't think you can be a great president unless you have both conviction and the capacity to change things. But I measure my worth in the job I have done, not just by espousing core principles and making all the right enemies, but in effecting change.

■ **Being governor.** It was very good for me because it forced me to deal with some of my own weaknesses. It forced me to learn how to manage conflict. It forced me to make tough decisions.

poll suggested he could win back his job, Clinton ran again in 1982 as a changed, consensus-seeking candidate.

What emerged after his re-election was a governing style based on innovation without alienation. On issues including the adoption of a gasoline tax, a proposal for a state constitutional amendment banning state abortion funding and a state civil-rights law, Clinton carefully walked lines that leave many in doubt about where he really stands.

There has been much less focus on the way the Reagan era virtually forced Clinton to develop a new brand of politics. "The big umbrella under which his evolution began and continues," says former aide Betsey Wright, "is the legacy of the Reagan era's shift of responsibility for policies and budgets to the states and the governors." In the fields of education, health care and welfare, governors had to find innovative ways to handle old problems.

Like many governors, Clinton also felt the need to pursue and protect business interests that could boost the state economy. That drew criticism from some Democratic interest groups. On the question of right-to-work laws, for instance, Clinton has done his best to obscure his real views. Sometimes he says he would not vote to extend right-to-work to other states; sometimes he says he would not deny Arkansans the right to pass such a law. Pressed recently to state his position, Clinton declined: "You're asking me to answer a question that will start a political controversy."

National network. While his transformation to a more moderate position continued, Clinton and his wife kept up their vast national network. "They have the world's largest mental rolodex," says Mickey Kantor, a friend and adviser. The relationships are genuinely warm and caring. But they also have been splendidly symbiotic and mutually useful. The Clintons have liked their Washington pals for the special stature they confer on a small-state governor. The out-of-power pals, after so many years of losing campaigns, have been drawn to him because they have desperately looked for a shot at power long denied them.

In July of 1987, Clinton gathered a group of confidants in Little Rock to mull whether to run for president in 1988. He was clearly worried about how an arduous campaign would affect his only child, daughter Chelsea, then 7. Kantor remembers sitting on the porch of the governor's mansion the day before Clinton was to announce his decision. Chelsea came out and declared: "Mom says we might not go on vacation, that you might run for president." When Clinton said that was possible, Chelsea replied: "If you run, we'll just go alone." Says Kantor: "I think that was the clincher." Still, Clinton followed the race feverishly, even to the point of showing friends a sample TV-ad script he had written describing how Michael Dukakis could fight back on the crime question.

WARREN K. LEFFLER—USN&WR

The Fulbright factor. *Clinton's leading mentor*

After winning another term in 1990, Clinton began his presidential quest for real. After stalling on a decision, he became chairman of the Democratic Leadership Council, a group composed mainly of Southern moderates trying to pull the party back from the left. He and his advisers had long assumed that he would run for the nomination from the right, advocating "enterprise based" approaches to government, with his main opposition coming from a traditional liberal like New York's Mario Cuomo.

At a key meeting in September 1991, Clinton gathered an eclectic group of about 40 advisers at Capitol Hill's Washington Court hotel. According to Kantor, the team planned from November backward, not January forward, and it was clear from the beginning that Illinois and Michigan would be critical primaries. Even when Clinton was buffeted by revelations over his personal life, and then lost New Hampshire, he had a campaign structure in place to absorb the blow. Clinton admired the way Gary Hart had prepared intellectually for his races, understanding that once a campaign starts, it is hard to find time to learn anything new. So early on, he collected a wealth of policy papers from his thrumming network.

The rumor mill. Only the persistent rumors about Clinton's marital infidelity seemed to swamp the network. The candidate privately admitted to his closest friends that he had had an extramarital affair, that it had ended and that the woman had promised to remain silent. He also promised his friends that he would not repeat such indiscretions during the campaign, telling them that "there aren't going to be any Donna Rices," a reference to the woman who helped sink Hart in 1987. An upcoming interview by former Miss America, Elizabeth Ward of Arkansas, in *Playboy* magazine will surely revive public speculations. But Ward says she never had a sexual relationship with Clinton.

So far, in this campaign, as in his life, Clinton has shown repeatedly his ability to adjust to new realities—from the accusations of Gennifer Flowers to the emergence of Paul Tsongas. "I never expected to be challenged from the right in the primaries," Clinton says. But his wiggle-room philosophy served him well. Soon he was downplaying conservative proposals, such as reform of the welfare system, and highlighting more-liberal notions, such as retraining for displaced workers.

Clinton has made himself into a masterful politician, learning to cajole Arkansans out of their doubts about him—when he was a young firebrand, when he wanted to come back in '82, when he flirted with running for president in '87, when he moved them forward on policy matters, even when he promised during the 1990 governor's race that he wouldn't run for president. But that's a state of 2.5 million people he knows very well. The question now, as he continues to try to allay fears about his character, is whether the political education of Bill Clinton has prepared him to persuade an entire nation to accept him. ■

BY DONALD BAER AND STEVEN V. ROBERTS