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FRONT

Three of Penn's most prominent political alumni—Ed Rendell, Jon M. Huntsman Jr., and Arlen Specter—discuss their time as office-seekers and public servants, and offer some hard-earned advice about what needs fixing. **BY SAMUEL HUGHES**

One's a lifelong Democrat from the East. One's a lifelong Republican from the West who represented his country in the Far East. One's a Republican-turned-Democrat from the Midwest who represented an Eastern state as a centrist. All have run for office and won—as governor (Pennsylvania, Utah), senator (Pennsylvania), mayor and district attorney (Philadelphia); all have also run and lost. None is currently in or running for office.

Ed Rendell C'65 Hon'00, Jon M. Huntsman Jr. C'87 Hon'10, and Arlen Specter C'51—their personalities are as different as morning, noon, and night. But all are talented, hardworking men with a yen for public service—and stories to tell.





CONFESSIONS OF AN ANTI-WUSS

In a new book and interview, Ed Rendell—the former Pennsylvania governor, Philadelphia mayor, and DNC chair—talks about political leadership, and the current lack of it. He also offers some thoughts on Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, Hillary Clinton—and the least sexy word in the English language.

ED Rendell was relaxing at his home in the East Falls section of Philadelphia when he got the call from Comcast SportsNet. It was December 2010, and the NFL had just cancelled a big game between the Philadelphia Eagles and the Minnesota Vikings, even though the heavy snow that was forecast had yet to start falling. Would Rendell, then in the final days of his second term as governor of Pennsylvania, be willing to share his thoughts about the cancellation on TV?

No one who has followed his career even casually would be surprised by the answer. A regular commentator since his days as mayor of Philadelphia, Rendell is as viscerally addicted to sports as he is to politics, and confident of his ability to connect with an audience on pretty much any subject.

And so, on national TV, the Commonwealth's chief executive blurted out that America was “becoming a nation of wusses,” and that the unnecessary cancellation was just further evidence of the nation’s “wussification.” The phrasing—and the sentiment—resonated. After expounding on that theme on *NBC Nightly News* and the front page of the *The Washington Times* (among other media outlets), he started writing a book. The result was *A Nation of Wusses: How America's Leaders Lost the Guts to Make Us Great*, published this past June by Wiley.

Equal parts political memoir, call to arms, and high-spirited romp, *Wusses* uses an earthy, conversational voice to tell stories and make points.

“I have nothing against making a decision that will keep people safe,” Rendell writes in the opening chapter, “but [leaders should not be] making a decision based on the sole calculation that it will keep their job safe.” And what is “so desperately important,” he adds, “is that our newfound ‘wussiness’ is affecting things that really do matter to our country and to our people.”

Writing *Wusses* gave Rendell a chance to look back over his own political career as well as serve up some salty prescriptions for the nation’s problems.

“I’ve been so busy in my 34-year public career that I really never had the time to sort of look back and think about the things that happened and how they happened and why they happened,” he says. “I wrote it all myself. And people say, ‘Well, you must have had a ghostwriter.’ I didn’t. I wrote it in longhand. It reads the way I talk.”

To get started, he took a group of close associates from his years in politics out to dinner, and made notes as they swapped stories. “It was so much fun,” he says. “It was hysterical. We’d tell stories, and sometimes people would be laughing so hard they would cry.”

He did the actual writing “in my last six months as governor and my first year as non-governor,” on weekends and at night. “Often I would start writing at 10 o’clock at night, and I would look up after I got to the end of the chapter, and it would be 3:30 in the morning. But as I wrote it, I amused myself thoroughly.”

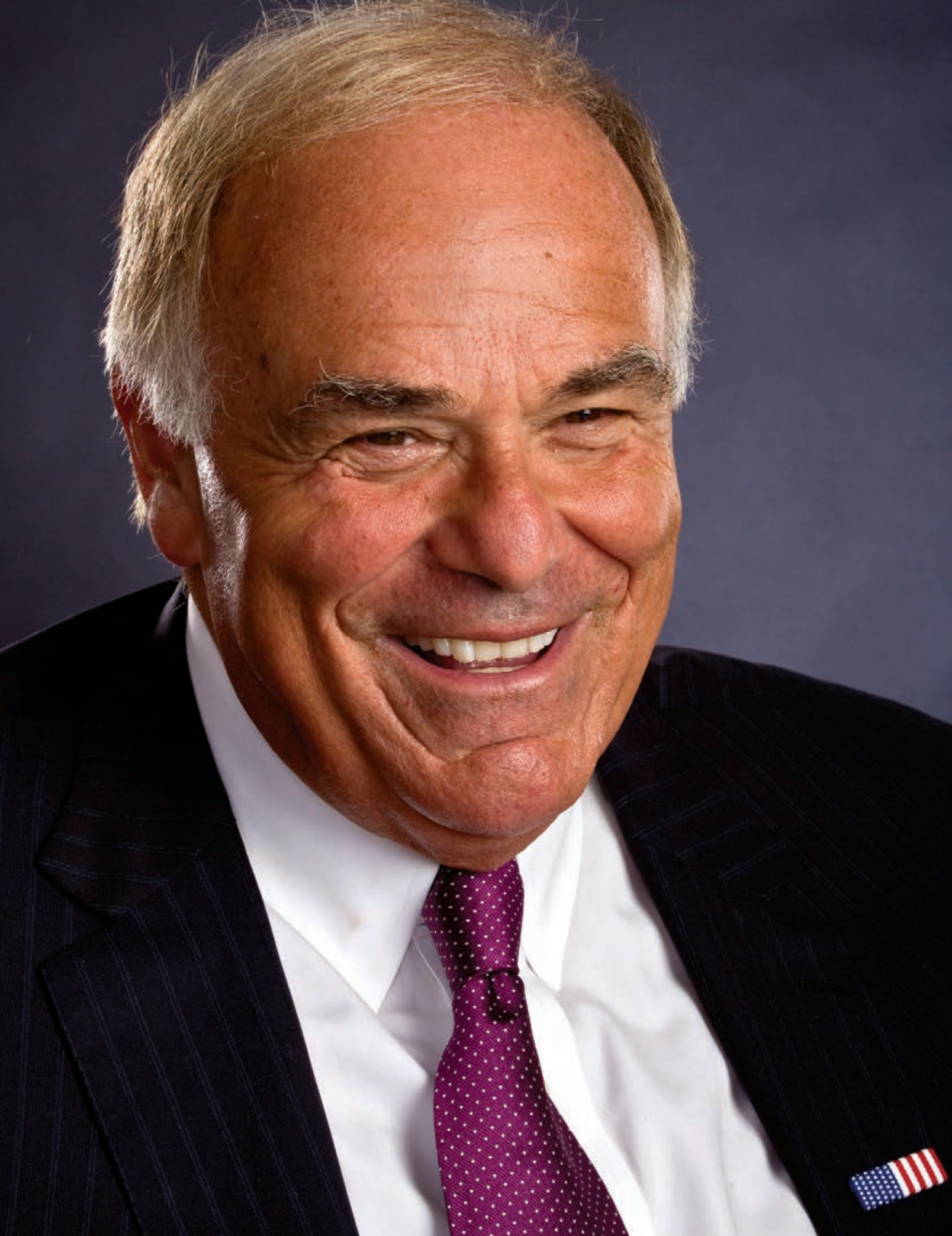
He admits that the title “may be a little frivolous,” and some stories—like the one

about a certain well-endowed donkey—may put off some stuffier commentators. But there’s plenty of meaty material to interest students of American government and politics.

“I like one review that’s on Amazon,” he says. “It said, ‘If you like Ed Rendell, you’ll love this book.’ And I think that’s probably a fair assessment, although I think there’s stuff in here that anybody could like, even people who disagree with me politically, even people who are what we would describe as conservative or right-wing. I don’t spare the rod on Democrats at all. I think I’m probably slightly tougher on Republicans, but not much.”

Though he’s no longer in office, and says he’s not interested in running for anything now, he’s almost as busy as he was as governor and mayor—teaching at the Fels Institute, offering commentary for NBC News and Comcast SportsNet, and serving as a consultant or board member for several green and alternative-energy firms. He’s also one of three co-chairs (along with New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger) of Building America’s Future Educational Fund, a bipartisan coalition of elected officials, whose stated mission is “bringing about a new era of US investment in infrastructure that enhances our nation’s prosperity and quality of life.”

Rendell sat down with *Gazette* senior editor Samuel Hughes in early July, shortly after completing a book-signing tour around Pennsylvania.



Interview

What were your goals in writing the book?

The first goal was I wanted to show young people that, if you spend your life in public service, you're not going to get paid very well. Working conditions are going to be terrible. It's going to be frustrating, challenging. You're going to fail as often as you succeed. But despite all that, it's a wonderful way to live. You don't make what society would consider a lot of money, but the psychic income you get from every day trying to help people, protect people, it's just a wonderful way to live.

My second goal, I believe very strongly that government can and should be a catalyst for change. It's creating an opportunity for people who've never had opportunity and protecting our most vulnerable citizens. And I was deeply troubled by the sort of anti-government feeling: government's the enemy; government's the problem; government's this; government's that. I wanted to relate through the book that government is not the enemy; it's not the problem; that there's good government and bad government; that there's bad and wasteful government spending but there's also good, targeted, and effective government spending. It's not a question of big or small government, it's effective government. The taxpayers have the right to expect us to be cost-conscious, to spend money well and wisely, but they also have the right to expect us to invest in things that make a difference.

Third reason was, to key into the title, to say that I think our political leaders being so risk-averse is one of the things that's crippling our ability to go forward on the major issues.

Such as?

Like what we're going to do with the deficit. Democrats are afraid to tell their base, senior citizens, the truth, that Medicare was designed in 1964 when the average life expectancy was 69. It's now 48 years later, and we're living to 78. So of course the program has to be changed, and of course it can't keep spending money like that.

Republicans have got to tell their base and Grover Norquist that you're not going

to get out of this problem without raising revenue. And anybody who's ever looked at it knows that there are going to have to be spending cuts, but there have to be revenue increases. And it's mostly because our politicians have lost any courage that we're paralyzed. Even more than the partisanship, we are paralyzed. We are afraid to take on our base.

Give some specific examples.

So we've got [Mitt] Romney, a very bright, intelligent man. I know him fairly well, and I respect him. When the healthcare decision comes out, he says it's a penalty because that's what it was in Massachusetts; that's what he believed it was. Then apparently he gets a call from the Republicans in the House, in the Congress, who tell him that he'd better get out there and say it's a tax. So he gets out and says it's a tax. Which makes him look silly. He didn't even have the courage to look smart.

And Mitt Romney all throughout this campaign has turned away from opportunities to look courageous. Very first debate, when that soldier called in and said he was gay but he had served in Iraq, and everyone booed, Mitt Romney should have said, "Hey, folks, I don't care if you disagree with his lifestyle or his choices, but he's out there risking his life for us. He deserves your respect and admiration." Maybe they would have booed louder, but he would have gotten the respect of people all across the country. And he just wimped out because he's scared of the base.

One of the people I cite in the book, who's not necessarily a hero, but he's the epitome of a non-wuss, is Tom Coburn. Probably one of the five most conservative senators in the Senate, who I probably disagree with 80 percent of the time on political philosophy or judgments or positions, but yet who was tremendous on Simpson-Bowles, which still is the best blueprint for us getting out of the problems we face. On Simpson-Bowles he voted to raise revenue by closing tax loopholes.

And when Grover Norquist said, "No, that's a tax increase"—and Coburn had signed a no-tax pledge—he said, "Grover, you're wrong, it's not a tax increase, it's closing a loophole, and you can go pound sand." We need more people like him.

Everybody likes bold leadership in principle, but there's good bold leadership and not-so-good bold leadership. Is one of your messages that boldness has to be smart and well marketed?

It needs to be explained. But I think even if people disagree with what you've done, if they think you've done it honestly and sincerely, they're okay with it. When [as Philadelphia district attorney in 1978] I ordered the arrest of the policemen who beat up [MOVE member] Delbert Africa, in the short run my popularity, the [favorable] ratings, dropped 20 percent. But I ran for reelection a year later, and I got 81 percent of the vote. So people disagreed with what I did, wildly—I mean, there was a huge march and demonstration—yet people respected the fact that I did what I believed in, and I had the courage to do it.

I took great pains to explain why I did it—that you can't have a society where the police, no matter how justified in a moral sense, [act as] judge, jury, and executioner. It just doesn't work. So, yeah, you're right, it has to be smart. But I think over the course of time, if you're in an executive position in government—mayor, county commissioner, governor, president—people are going to disagree with you maybe two out of 10 times in your decision-making process. Where they have to agree with you is, "Well, that Smith, he does what he believes in. I don't always agree with him, but he does what he believes in."

Sometimes it doesn't work, though.

Sometimes you have to make difficult decisions, and you wind up losing for it. As I say in the book, if you're running for office—I don't care what office it is—if you don't have a core set of values that tells you there's some things I'm going to fight for, even if it means that I'm risking losing, then you shouldn't run for office in the first place.

I cite the Democrats who voted for healthcare [reform] and ran away from it in the 2010 campaign. What did they think? Their opponent was going to forget? It was stupid. And most of the five things that had gone into effect by the 2010 election were all extremely popular. Your kids can stay on your health insurance till you're 26. You can't deny a child coverage because he or she has a preexisting illness. Seniors getting a \$250

check to help with their prescription drugs. Those were enormously popular. Stand and talk about those! Defend it. Not that Obama listens to me, but that's my advice to Obama. If they make the Affordable Care Act an issue, defend it.

You mentioned that *infrastructure* has been called the least sexy word in the language. How can you improve the nomenclature to make it more sellable?

You don't talk about infrastructure; you talk about roads, bridges, dams, levees, water systems. People understand what that is a lot more readily. Interestingly, infrastructure has always been a Republican issue. They were the big proponents of infrastructure spending. And now the great irony of it is our infrastructure's falling apart. We went from best in the world to 16th best in the world. It's stunning. It's injuring our public safety. It's hurting our economic competitiveness, screwing up our quality of life.

But the imperative is even more than just that. Infrastructure's the fastest creator of well-paying jobs that can't be outsourced, the fastest creator, with its jobs on the road, on the bridge, at the dam, at the water system. And it's jobs

back in the factory because you're going to need steel, you're going to need aggregate, you're going to need concrete, you're going to need asphalt, you're going to need all those things to do infrastructure work, and they have to be produced at factories. So it's a great job producer. They're well-paying jobs, jobs that pay [from \$50,000 to] \$90,000 a year. It should be a no-brainer.

How about knowledge infrastructure, which is of some concern to places like Penn. How important is that, and why is this even an issue?

Again, it's this anti-spending mania. To feed the knowledge infrastructure you have to have strong pre-K through 12, strong collegiate education, strong postgraduate education, strong technical schools, post-high-school technical-school education. And then secondly, to feed the knowledge infrastructure, you need research and development dollars. And it makes abundant common sense. But you have the majority political party in Washington saying, "Unh-unh, we don't want to spend money." And again, it's the imperative. There's good government spending, and there's bad government spending. While we're cutting, if we're going to take care of our deficit,

we need to cut, need to raise revenue. But we also need to build in some money to invest in the things that we need to grow our economy.

Both Bushes, father and son, and President Reagan, faced with their own recessions, increased government spending in the year following the advent of the recession. And it helped them get out of the recession—because every economist worth his salt knows the way you get out of a recession is to spend money. Simple as that. So again, it goes back to that central theme that you've got to be able to distinguish between what government can do and what government can't do.

Austerity's not working in Europe, and it won't work here. But you can have austerity for the long run and investment for the short run that will accomplish both goals.

Talk about your approach to trimming city workers' benefits versus [Wisconsin Governor] Scott Walker's. You say collective bargaining doesn't produce deficits—mayors and governors who give away the store do.

I essentially did the same thing as Scott Walker did [as mayor of Philadelphia], except my unions opposed me. His unions went along with the cuts he wanted, and he got in trouble because he went one step further. He said during the campaign that there had to be those benefit reductions. But he went a step further and tried to eviscerate collective bargaining, which he never mentioned during the campaign.

Where Scott Walker is wrong is it's not collective bargaining, it's governors and mayors who don't have the backbone to stand up and make their case to the people. I stressed in the book how we went out and made our case to the people. We told the people over and over again, "These guys get 14 paid holidays. You get seven or eight on your job. These guys don't contribute to their healthcare. You contribute 10 percent of your salary to get healthcare." And we would make the case, and people would understand that.

I tell the story about when a municipal worker was beating up on me for being too hard on the municipal unions at my son's baseball game—and the building-trades guys, the fathers on my team, start

Excerpt

DECONSTRUCTING WUSSITUDE

In his new book, A Nation of Wusses: How America's Leaders Lost the Guts to Make Us Great, Ed Rendell lays out the "Top Ten Reasons Why Most American Politicians Are Wusses." To see his examples supporting each reason, go to our website.

Ever since David Letterman debuted the first Top Ten list, I have been enamored with the concept and have composed them for birthday parties, farewell parties, anniversary galas, office parties, and so on. So I couldn't write a book without including at least one. Here goes:

10. They Refuse to Give Credit to a Rival No Matter What He Does
9. They Refuse to Admit Mistakes
8. They Refuse to Answer Questions from the Media
7. They Don't Have the Courage to Say No to Their Base
6. They Refuse to Debate
5. They Refuse to Stand by Their Votes
4. They Refuse to Speak in Front of Protesters
3. They Change Their Positions as Early and as Often as You Change Your Socks
2. They Run from Their Allies at the First Hint of Trouble
1. They Take Credit for Things They Voted Against

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beating up on him. And that told me that we had been effective in getting our message across.

To what do you attribute your ability to survive in an NRA-supporting state like Pennsylvania?

I do not, in any way, shape, or form, pass myself off as a hunter. Listen, don't try to be something you're not—because people will see through that in two seconds. I think if I have survived, it's for two reasons. The major reason is because people know I speak my mind, and they appreciate that. The second thing that I think helps is my love of sports. That gives me a connection with a lot of those blue-collar workers who might not like the fact that I'm pro gun control or pro choice, but like the fact that I know sports, speak their language, et cetera.

What was the most wish-you-could-change moment in your career?

My signing the pay raise [for Pennsylvania legislators]. In 2005 the legislature came to me with this pay-raise idea. And it was terrible. It was far too much, just looked ridiculous. And I said I would veto it. And I almost got punched by one of the legislative leaders, they were so angry. They came back in 2006, same bad bill, and they essentially said to me and my chief of staff that, if I didn't sign it, I would never get one piece of legislation that I cared about through, even if I got reelected governor and was governor for the next five years.

I should have been smart enough to know that they were bluffing, that they couldn't have ever carried that out. And I should have called them on their bluff. But I didn't. I signed the bill, even though in the signing message I expressed doubts about it. I immediately declared upon signing it that I wouldn't take the pay raise that was going to me. I didn't suffer. I got reelected handily. But most of the legislative leaders who pushed for it lost. And if I could do it all over again, I would have vetoed it.

You've fired a couple of gentle shots across Obama's bow, regarding his inability to reach a deal on the Simpson-Bowles deficit-reduction panel and that sort of thing—though you also compliment him. Is there frustration with him for not selling his programs so well?

On stimulus and healthcare, right out

of the bat, they did a terrible job in explaining to the people and messaging it. Had they done a good job, both of those programs would be much more popular than they are today, and the president would be in less political trouble than he is today.

But the president on balance has been a non-wuss. He did a lot of non-wussy things, being for the financial bailout. It's extremely unpopular. He could have just said, "I'm reversing what President Bush and Secretary Paulson did, we're not going through with that." People would have loved it. It would have probably destroyed the financial structure of the world, but he would have gotten some short-run gain by doing it.

Secondly, the auto bailout. People love the auto bailout now, but we forget how, again, unpopular it was at the time. President Obama dug his heels in and did it. Healthcare itself, his own staff, Rahm Emanuel and others, argued with him, "Don't go big. Do the insurance reform first. Everybody loves that." But he understood that, if we were going to end the disgrace of America being the only civilized nation in the world that doesn't provide guaranteed healthcare to its citizens, it had to happen in those first two years because he instinctively knew he would never have majorities at the level that he had them then.

So I think on balance he's been fairly courageous—even on Simpson-Bowles. He didn't have the courage to give seniors the bad news, so he didn't follow through on Simpson-Bowles. But you remember about a year and a half ago he and [House Speaker John] Boehner were this close to doing the big deal for \$5.9 trillion. That had to be based on a rough delineation of Simpson-Bowles.

I think on balance no one, myself included, is a perfect non-wuss. But on balance the President is definitely a non-wuss.

How much did the fact that you're a Friend of Hillary play into your frustration?

Well, first of all, this has nothing to do with Hillary. This is Barack. Hillary and Barack became a team. One of the best parts of the Obama presidency is how wonderfully well they both have meshed together. He gives her the opportunity to shine. She not only does a great job, but she's extremely loyal to him. You

never hear anything about "State Department officials, anonymous sources criticize the president." You don't hear any of that. So they've been a great team. So that's buried.

Any chance of a Hillary-Rendell ticket?

Well, it's interesting. Vice president is the dream job for a politician. Why? Because it's a nine-week campaign. They call you up the last week in August and ask you to run for vice president, nine weeks left. Secondly, all the money is raised. You don't even have to raise money. It's an ideal job.

Now, you go to a lot of funerals. I'm just finishing the Caro book about Lyndon Johnson. Oh, my, did he hate the vice-presidency. He hated it with a passion. Although his reason for accepting it was that one out of every three vice presidents become president. And he correctly assumed that he would never become president by running for it directly.

So that's a roundabout way of saying you haven't totally ruled it out.

But as I said in another part of the book, who in their right mind would want someone like me as their running mate or as vice president? Good God. If I were the presidential candidate, I wouldn't want anybody like me on the ticket.

Is there anything that you're mulling that you haven't talked about?

There is nothing I want to run for. I would love to run Hillary Clinton's campaign. And if she won, and there was an interesting job in the White House, I might take it. I might not. But I believe she's great. Her work as Secretary of State has convinced me of that even more than I felt in 2008. I think just there's probably no one in my lifetime that would come to the presidency with the breadth of foreign-policy experience, domestic-policy experience that she has. And she's served in the Senate, the State Department. She saw what the executive [branch] was like by being First Lady—and a very active First Lady. She brings an unprecedented level of experience to it, just unprecedented.

And I also believe the time has come for this country to be led by a woman. I mean, we men have made a pretty big hash of it. So it's probably time to try a woman. ♦

In an excerpt from his new book, former Senator Arlen Specter recounts the town meetings that signaled the end for his brand of moderate politics.

YOU SAY YOU WANT A REVOLUTION



By the spring of 2010, a kind of perfect storm was brewing for Senator Arlen Specter C'51. The collapse of the economy in 2008 and 2009, the TARP bailout and stimulus package, the growing deficit and the bitter debate over health-care reform—among other things—had led to the rise of the Tea Party and its vehement demands for change.

Specter was not a beloved figure in Pennsylvania politics, but he was well respected as a smart, effective, and seemingly indefatigable senator, despite turning 80 that year and hav-

ing overcome a series of health issues that included Hodgkin's disease, heart-bypass surgery, and brain tumors. A Republican since his first (successful) run for the Philadelphia district attorney's post in 1965, Specter had joined the GOP not so much on philosophical grounds as by the fact that the city's Republican Party supported him when the Democratic City Committee would not. Once elected to the Senate in 1980, he had managed to tack a centrist course through the partisan straits, even if the GOP's increasingly

rightward drift made him vulnerable on the starboard side.

"I'd always been issue-oriented," he writes in his new book, *Life Among the Cannibals: A Political Career, a Tea Party Uprising, and the End of Governing As We Know It* (Thomas Dunne Books). "I wouldn't even call it pragmatism. It was a matter of using my own judgment and doing what I thought was right, on a case-by-case basis, on whatever issue came up."

That approach, he adds, "had led to a host of Republican apostasies," which included voting to increase education

AP PHOTO/ALEX BRANDON

funding by 153 percent, “tripling NIH funding, advancing stem-cell research, and enhancing worker safety through OSHA and the NLRB.”

Though he acknowledges that he “had never really felt comfortable in the Republican caucus,” as recently as 2004 he was supported in his primary reelection bid against the conservative Pat Toomey by President George W. Bush, who called him “the right man for the Senate” and “a firm ally when it matters.”

Then came the economic collapse. Specter voted in favor of the TARP bailout and for the federal stimulus package. Though the former had been pushed by the Bush Administration and both have been credited by most economists with helping to save the nation’s economy, those votes would come back to haunt him. By the spring

of 2009, his approval rating among Pennsylvania Republicans had fallen to 30 percent, and he trailed Toomey by 21 points. A statewide tour convinced him that he and the GOP now had “irreconcilable differences.”

Facing a certain loss to Toomey in the primary, Specter decided to do what many Democrats had been urging for years: change parties. On April 28, 2009, he did, saying, “My change in party affiliation does not mean that I will be a party-line voter any more for the Democrats than I have been for the Republicans.”

And so, when the Senate voted on the Affordable Care Act the following December, Specter cast the 60th and deciding vote as a Democrat. Five months later, he would be defeated in the Democratic primary by Joe Sestak, who would go on to lose to Toomey in November.

In Chapter Nine of *Life Among the Cannibals*, Specter describes the highly charged town meetings about healthcare reform that he held with his Pennsylvania constituents in towns like Lebanon and State College in 2009, when Tea Party rage simmered over into a full boil. During those meetings questioners and protesters dismissed the Affordable Care Act as “a vehicle to take us down a path of socialism and totalitarianism,” called the 79-year-old Specter a “fucking traitor,” and chanted “No to socialist health-care!” One man screamed: “I hope you die!”

The chapter opens on August 11, the day of the first town meeting, with a red convertible cruising through downtown Lebanon and bearing signs that read: “RETIRE SENATOR SPECTER 2010.”

Excerpt

Protesters massed around the college, many waving signs reading “Obama Healthcare—Down Right Evil” and “Benedict Arlen—Don’t Reelect a Traitor!” The *Times* photographed a white-haired woman in metal-rimmed glasses and a floral print dress holding a handwritten sign, “I Love You ARLEN,” as a younger woman jabbed a finger at her. The caption read, “Nancy Gusti, 73, of Lebanon, stood her ground as a passerby berated her outside the meeting.”

I stepped into the auditorium. In a navy suit, white shirt, and muted blue tie, I stood on a parquet island toward the front of the gray-carpeted room. I faced the crowd, most in short-sleeved knits and shorts against the August heat, and a massive green steam locomotive roaring down the tracks on a mural that covered most of the rear wall. Mountain and town scenes cast a placid aura from the adjacent walls.

Evading our sign ban, several people carried small placards with slogans such as “Kill the Bill.” One man raised sheets of colored copy paper, laser-printed with slogans including “You are no longer trusted” and “Keep your hand out of my pocket. The well is dry!” He wore pink paper cutouts over his ears, maybe to symbolize that he was listening carefully, or not at all.

Outside, [my driver] Joe Sciarra stayed with the car, a maroon 2005 Lincoln, in the rear parking lot off Spring Street. Sciarra could cast a chilling patrolman’s glare, and stowed a revolver at the base of the driver’s seat. But he grew uneasy as the protesters massed. He found a Lebanon police officer, asked for his supervisor, and then told the sergeant that we needed more support.

I made a six-and-a-half-minute introduction, which I said was as long as anybody should speak, laying out the problems of the current healthcare system, including taxpayers’ covering steep emergency room fees, and the ground rules for the meeting: ninety minutes, and questions only from those thirty holding cards.

When I asked whoever had card number 1 to come forward, a middle-aged blonde in a turquoise top and white pants demanded that her senators and representatives also carry whatever health plan we approved for her. “I understand at this point you’re not,” she said, chopping the air. The crowd gave a burst of applause.

I responded, as I had before, that all Americans should have the same plan, including members of Congress.

Questioner 2, in a blue blouse and off-white Capri pants, shouted that she didn’t like her elected officials running around calling her un-American, a rabble-rouser, a mobster, and a Nazi. “I’m sick of the lies,” she said, jabbing a finger at me, her voice strong but tense. “I don’t like being lied to; I don’t like being lied about.” She ended by declaring, “I want you as my senator to go back to Washington, D.C. ... Shut up and get out of the way.”

More applause.

Before I could call on the next questioner, a heavyset man with trimmed gray hair and beard, later identified as Craig Anthony Miller, fifty-nine, charged down the aisle toward me. Face flushed, Miller waved a sheaf of papers, a water bottle wedged under one arm, a pen in the pocket of his gray T-shirt. He hollered that he wanted to speak, had been assured that he could speak, but then didn’t get one of the thirty cards: a victim of more government lies.

I strode toward Miller, closing the gap.

From the side of the room, [Frank] Leitera, the Capitol Hill police team leader, hissed into his cufflink mic, “Jesus Christ, he’s going in.”

Leitera lunged forward, and his partner rushed in from the rear.

Before they could reach the action, a burly neighbor in a white ball cap grabbed Miller and steered and then shoved him toward a row of seats,

Now, half a dozen cops and security guards were racing toward us, I shouted, “Wait a minute!”—twelve times.

I stood firm and told the closest officer not to remove or even touch Miller, I didn't want the headline to read "Citizen Evicted." I wanted "Senator Keeps His Cool."

The cops stood down.

Miller, quivering, finger poking at me, shouted that he wanted to leave. I told him that was his right. He said, "I'm going to speak my mind before I leave." Inches away, he shouted at me, "I don't care how crooked you are. I'm not a lobbyist with all kinds of money to stuff in your pocket so that you can cheat the citizens of this country ... One day God's going to stand before you, and he's going to judge you and the rest of your damn cronies up on the Hill ..."

He gave senators credit for a bit too much power.

Shouting, "I'm leaving!" Miller stormed out of the hall, a beefy security officer clearing the way.

I held up my hand in a stop gesture. "Okay," I said, "we've just had a demonstration of democracy." As for Miller's charge that his constitutional rights were being trampled, I said, "I'm encouraging constitutional rights by coming to Lebanon to talk to my constituents."

The next day, *The New York Times* would run a front-page, above the fold photo of Miller gesturing menacingly at me, as I listened with arms folded. Network television would replay the scene constantly for days and periodically air it even months later to show Tea Party rage. The performance would land Miller guest spots on Fox and MSNBC talk shows.

Questioner 4, a middle-aged woman, told me, "I do not want to pay on a healthcare plan that includes the right for a woman to kill her unborn baby."

I responded that although we didn't yet have a Senate bill, I anticipated subscribers would have the option to have a plan that excluded abortion coverage while others could have the coverage if they so elected.

Questioner 6, a portly, balding, gray-haired man, hit the heart of the government-intrusion rebellion in a soft, reasoned, almost beseeching tone.

He said the healthcare plan was obviously written with the "assumption that government has the right to control our lives from pre-birth to death."

He noted "a few problems: The illegals, they shouldn't even be here." He ended by imploring, "Would you leave us alone?"

Questioner 7, Katy Abram from North Cornwall Township, stood to make a speech that would launch the self-described stay-at-home mother to national celebrity. Abram and her husband, Sam, had brought a video camera and taped each other as they questioned me. Katy Abram trembled when she took the mic, her dark curly hair framing a fair complexion over an aqua T-shirt, olive shorts, and white sneakers. Gesturing with her left arm as she spoke, her voice occasionally breaking and rising, Abram said:

Thank you. I am a Republican, but I'm first and foremost, I'm a conservative. I don't believe this is just about health care. It's not about TARP, it's not about left and right. This is about the systematic dismantling of this country. I'm only thirty-five years old. I have never been interested in politics. You have awakened a sleeping giant. We are tired of this. This is why everybody in this room is so ticked off. I don't want this country turning into

Russia, turning into a socialized country. My question for you is, what are you going to do to restore this country back to what our founders created, according to the Constitution?

The room erupted. One man, joining his neighbors in a standing ovation, raised his hands over his head and brought them together in thunderous claps.

I said, "Well, there are a few people who didn't stand up and applaud, but not too many."

Abram would soon guest on CNN's *American Morning*, Fox News's *Hannity*, and MSNBC's *Hardball*, and headline Tea Party rallies as far away as Florida. A year after the Lebanon meeting, in August 2010, at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., Abram would receive the first Liberty Heart Award from the 9-12 Project, founded by conservative idol and Fox News host Glenn Beck.

Questioner 9, a clean-cut, russet-haired man in a blue oxford shirt, complained: "The government hasn't done anything right ... You're taking our kids' future and driving it right into the toilet."

More applause. Questioner 14, a strawberry blonde in a maize blouse, introduced herself as a nurse from Lebanon and thanked me profusely for coming. Then she extolled the health plan.

"Thank you for your positive comment," I said when she had finished. "I knew that if I looked hard enough, far enough in this large group, I'd find someone who likes the healthcare plan. Thank you."

By this time, after some trouble with the sound system, I had been handing my mic in turn to each questioner.

Questioner 17, a heavysset, soft-spoken older man with a vigorous white beard below thinning white hair, identified himself as a former Republican committeeman who had supported me. "But now you defected." He then said the Koran calls for slaying nonbelievers, offered to cite verses, and asked me whether I had read the Muslim holy book.

Political pundit Peggy Noonan called the 2009 "town hall rebellion" a turning point in both parties' fortunes. "That is when the first resistance to Washington's plans on health care became manifest, and it's when a more generalized resistance rose and spread."

On ABC's *This Week* the Sunday following my August 2009 meetings, host Jake Tapper played some video highlights of the sessions. "That's a lot of anger," Tapper told me. "Where does it come from, Senator Specter?"



"A variety of factors, Jake," I said. "I think people are very nervous because so many have lost their jobs, and I think that the uncertainty of the health-care bill ... I think we have to bear in mind that, although these people need to be heard and have a right to be heard, that they're not really representative of America, in my opinion."

I was wrong. The Tea Party protesters were not Astroturf, a movement manufactured and orchestrated by professional activists, but grassroots. ♦

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PRIMARY LESSONS


 Jon M. Huntsman Jr. may not have won the Republican presidential nomination, but he has some interesting observations on the primaries, the political process, and the current state of the Grand Old Party.

Running for President of the United States is, by all accounts, a daunting experience. Running for the Republican nomination in 2012 as a thoughtful, solutions-oriented candidate might best be characterized as Trial by Game Show.

By some reckonings, Jon M. Huntsman Jr. C'87 Hon'10 came across as the most reasoned and nuanced of the Republican candidates. Which, in the *Alice in Wonderland* universe that is the primary season, may be why he didn't come close to winning.

"Too much in the way of well thought-out and developed policy papers, and not enough

in the way of pandering," he said drily in a recent phone interview. "Lesson learned."

When he announced his candidacy in June 2011, the popular former governor of Utah offered detailed policy prescriptions and a worldview that sometimes bucked party trends. (The GOP should not become the "anti-science" party, he warned, and banks that are "too big to fail" are simply too big.) He declined to "run down" either his Republican rivals or President Obama, under whom he had served as US ambassador to China.

But the respect that his approach and

worldview earned from more moderate quarters did not help him much in the actual primary elections. (Nor did his not-so-secret weapon: the high-spirited, sometimes-irreverent "Jon2012girls"—daughters Abby C'o8, Liddy C'11, and Mary Anne—who provided support in the form of engaging interviews, videos, and tweeting. "We Nominate Jon Huntsman's Daughters for President," proclaimed a post on the always-irreverent *Jezebel* last November.)

Huntsman's resume is both strong and somewhat singular. Not many candidates of either party dropped out of high school to tour with their rock bands, and not many Penn students have spent two years doing missionary work in Taiwan before arriving on campus (in his case, transferring from the University of Utah).

Unlike most students, who build an intellectual framework in college and then try to fit their subsequent experiences into it, he says, "I was out there wandering

the back alleys of Taipei and Hualien as a teenager and hadn't yet had the opportunity to develop any intellectual construct in which you can actually put the pieces of the world or a very complex region together. And that's what Penn afforded me more than anything else."

At Penn, as a married father of two, he majored in political science with a concentration in international politics, taking every class that the late professor Alvin Rubinstein Gr'54 had to offer. Huntsman, whose family later funded the Huntsman Program in International Relations, describes Rubinstein as "the ultimate practitioner, or at least philosopher, of realpolitik, which was an enormous influence on my own worldview."

Huntsman got his start in politics as a staff assistant in the Reagan administration, then served as deputy assistant secretary of commerce for trade development and commerce for East Asian and Pacific affairs under President George H.W. Bush, who appointed him ambassador to Singapore in 1992. He later became a deputy US trade representative under President George W. Bush, and honed his business skills as an executive of the family business—the Huntsman Corporation, a global chemical company founded by his father, Jon M. Huntsman W'59 Hon'96.

In 2004, Huntsman ran for governor of Utah, and was elected with a convincing 58 percent of the vote; four years later he was re-elected in a landslide. By the time he stepped down in 2009 to serve as ambassador to China, his approval ratings were upwards of 80 percent, and the Pew Center on the States had named Utah the best-managed state in the country.

Since bowing out of the primaries in January, Huntsman has spent some time "decompressing," and was planning to skip last month's Republican convention in Tampa. But he has not been idle, serving on several "excellent corporate boards tied to American manufacturing" and joining a couple of think tanks, the most recent of which is the Brookings Institution. He has also been giving speeches around the world on subjects ranging from US-China relations to the state of politics in America. He plans to reassess the situation after the November elections.

Huntsman spoke by phone with *Gazette* senior editor Samuel Hughes at the end of July.

Interview

How difficult is it to get a nuanced message out in the political and media climate today?

It's almost impossible. As you can tell, I failed miserably at it. My own approach was to say, "I'm not going to pander; I'm not going to do the pledge stuff. I'm just going to tell it like it is." And I try to describe the world based on what it is, based on my own experiences, either in business, or as a policymaker as governor, or as a practitioner of foreign policy as ambassador. And if people don't like what I have to offer, I'll gladly move along, but I'm not going to change the pitch or the tone or the content of my message.

Nobody in today's world really wants to have issues rolled out in the context of solutions or problems to be resolved. Everything today is sort of pitched in hues of politics based on personal destruction and vilification of your opponent. And if you can't find those kinds of messages to weave throughout your policy discussion, then a lot of folks, at least in the early primary phases of the campaign, just don't have a lot of time for you.

How much does that primary fight hurt moderate candidates?

Well, call me naïve. I've been twice elected governor. I ran on getting things done, on putting forward solutions, solutions that were not always within the context of my own party, but rather were solutions that I thought were right for all of the people, or at least most of those I represented as governor. I'd lived overseas. And I thought I'd bring that same sort of approach to problem-solving and framing the issues that needed to be addressed to the run for the presidency—only to find that early, at least in the primary phase, you get a fraction of voters turning out in Iowa, in New Hampshire, but certainly South Carolina and Florida. And they want to be, in a sense, entertained. They want red-meat politics. They don't want solutions. Don't explain the world in terms of what it is and where you want to take the nation. We want the president vilified. We want the politics of personal destruction.

And I wasn't going to fall for that. That's not who I am, and it's not what I care to be as a politician. So we took it basically as far as we could, with the lament, when it was all said and done, that we don't have a system that allows for broad-based turnout early on. And we're hampered by that

because you don't get the majority of voices that are able to weigh in at the earliest possible phases of politics. If you did, you'd have more of a moderate tone, more of a can-do, problem-solving attitude on display, as opposed to the shrill partisanship that tends to now dominate in those early primary states.

What were the highlights and lowlights of your own campaign?

There were so many in both categories. Just kind of a kneejerk reaction is some of the lowlights were the debates. They sort of developed a game show-like quality, with a 30-second buzzer. "Now, give us your worldview in 30 seconds, and please don't elaborate beyond just the superficial."

So here we are, a nation in need of direction and a real thought-out vision on economics and foreign policy. And we don't give candidates for the highest office an opportunity in the early stages to really define who they are and where they want the country to go. And, moreover, you've got special-interest groups organizing the debates, which then ensures that the environment in which this discussion is held is going to be tilted in one particular direction or another.

So someone's going to have to pay some serious attention to how debates are organized and managed in the future. I think the American public got something out of those debates, but it was merely the entertainment value of watching these crazy people on the stage pontificate, usually in sharp, partisan ways.

You've said that the Republican Party is not in a good place right now. How much is that the fault of political leaders, and how much the fault of the voters?

Well, we don't have any political leaders right now, and that's part of the problem. People will follow leaders, those who offer a vision and offer a pathway forward. I mean, I can name them throughout the last hundred years who have done exactly that. You can't blame it on the proliferation of media outlets or the blogosphere or the different voices now that weigh in. Leadership is leadership. And we just don't have it now in the Republican Party.

I would argue that the election of 2012 is no different than the election of 1912. That was very much a reform-based election, led by the voice of Theodore Roosevelt.

He wasn't successful. Ultimately he broke off and became independent. But it was about trust-busting. It was about restructuring our corporate environment so that you didn't have wealth that was placed in so few hands. And ultimately Theodore Roosevelt succeeded in those years. It was toward the end of 1912 where he was still pushing for continued reform that his independent bid didn't work out for him.

Here we are a hundred years later. The reform that we're in need of is probably less on the economic side, at least on the regulatory side, as it was a hundred years ago, and a whole lot more on the political side. Fundamental political reform is needed: campaign-finance reform, term limits, closing the revolving door on members of Congress who kind of slide right on through to become lobbyists within 24 hours. Things like this I think fundamentally need to be addressed and changed if we're going to be able to re-infuse any trust into the system.

I think that's a big part of the whole leadership conundrum we face right now. It's really hard for a leader to break through when there's so little trust in politics and so little trust by the voting population in our institutions of power or elected officials. They tend to be seriously diminished as soon as they break through. And that's kind of where we find ourselves.

But the political stage is devoid of leadership, not only here but indeed throughout the world. I've just spent the last month over in Asia visiting half a dozen leading countries over there. And it seems that everywhere you look, the one common theme is we're a world that, A) is terribly insecure in every corner; and, B) and perhaps related, a world devoid of any real leadership.

You were quoted as saying that the GOP would be best served by a third-party movement. Do you see that happening at any point soon?

I think that's inevitable. I know some took it as being kind of a slam at the GOP. It was actually meant to be helpful in the sense that duopolies don't last forever, in politics and in the corporate world. If they're going to last beyond sort of a set or defined timeframe, competition is going to basically be what is needed in order for them to broaden and expand their message. And if the Republican Party's going to succeed longer-term, it's going to have to be hit by some element of competition from the outside that forces it to round out

its message in more of a big-picture way, in more of a confident, optimistic way, an approach basically that speaks to solutions and problem-solving as opposed to talking points and pandering.

So the Republican Party of old, like it was at the very beginning under Abraham Lincoln, where he spoke of the importance of individual dignity and the worth of the individual; or Theodore Roosevelt, who spoke of the importance of our land and the environment. Conservation was a Republican ideal back in those days. Or General Eisenhower, who was responsible for rounding out and expanding our nation's infrastructure. I mean, you can't even talk about infrastructure today in a Republican gathering without getting laughed out of the room.

Why is that? What's going on there?

Because there's an instinctive connection with big government programs. And big government programs are anathema in today's Republican Party. There's a role for government. It has to be defined. And whatever government does, it must do well. And the Republican Party still has not yet been able to really define what that proper role of government is. In some corners, it's no government. In other corners perhaps it's too much government. But we've got to get around to carefully defining what is the proper role of government in society and making sure that, whatever government does, it does well. We haven't arrived at that point in time yet.

Some of the things you've mentioned, such as infrastructure, sound not unlike what Ed Rendell is saying. And yet, as you say, that's not going to work in the current climate of the Republican Party. Is there any room for a serious, maybe even bipartisan, think-tank of people like you?

I think you've hit on something. And I've been approached by more than a few sane voices about the idea of putting together a think-tank, not individually, but maybe in concert with several other people, to look at the politics of the possible—solutions, in other words. Coming up with an agenda for the 21st century that really does speak to reality-based solutions that aren't off in some ethereal political land, but basically are tied to our here-and-now, 21st-century reality that would be based on tax reform, on adequate spending levels, on the national-security infrastructure, including a

Defense Department that everybody knows is going to have to be pared down at some point. You can't just pare down Social Security and Medicare without touching defense. Everything's got to be looked at. And infrastructure. You can't compete in the 21st century without adequate infrastructure that allows you to get people around, to say nothing of goods and services.

So all of this really does need to be addressed in a way that speaks to solutions, devoid of politics. But that becomes very, very difficult in today's hypercharged political environment.

I kind of write it off to the cycles of political history that Theodore White used to talk about and write about a couple of generations ago, and that is that there's a time and a place for all things; that these cycles are very, very real, and that they will play out and usher in something altogether new. And I suspect that, if you wait this cycle out, we'll see an opening for something new.

You said that you believe in the science of, for example, global warming. Why is this an issue? Can't religion and science coexist in the country?

I'm absolutely of that opinion. But again, my party, at least a lot of the early organizers, don't subscribe to the idea that our policymaking should be based on science or some empirical connection to science. It's common sense. And I always used it as governor as well, to drive everything that I did. If the scientific community weighs in on something that should be informing public policy, then we should stop and listen and be informed by people who have spent a lifetime training and researching in a particular subject area. And it will allow us to make better public policy around that. And I think climate change is one such area. It's fallen victim to politics. Yet when I look at Congress, I don't see a lot of physicists present. I don't see any climate scientists. I don't see people who've done a whole lot of research. But everybody's got an opinion on it.

I say, come on, time out, folks. Let's turn to those who actually do this for a living. Let them justify the science of climate change. If you let science do what science is supposed to do, they're going to render a good judgment that's peer reviewed and based on rigorous scrutiny, and we're going to have good information on which to base public policy. ♦