

# Money, money, money!



**Maureen Dowd**

**WASHINGTON** Clinton nostalgia is being replaced by Clinton neuralgia.

Why is it that America's roil family always seems better in abstract than in concrete? The closer it gets to running the world once more, the more you are reminded of all the things that bugged you the last time around.

The Clintons' neediness, their sense of what they are owed in material terms for their public service, their assumption that they're entitled to everyone's money.

Are we about to put the "For Rent" sign back on the Lincoln Bedroom?

If Americans are worried about money in politics, there is no larger concern than the Clintons, who are cosseted in a world where rich people endlessly scratch the backs of rich people.

They have a Wile E. Coyote problem; something is always blowing up. Just when the Clintons are supposed to be floating above it all, on a dignified cloud of do-gooding leading into 2016, pop-pop-pop, little explosions go off everywhere, reminding us of the troubling confections and values they drag around.

There's the continuing grotesque spectacle of Anthony Weiner and Huma Abedin. And there's the sketchy involvement of the Clintons' most prolific fund-raiser, Terry McAuliffe, and Hillary's brother Tony Rodham in a venture, GreenTech Automotive; it's under federal investigation and causing fireworks in Virginia, where McAuliffe is running for governor.

Many Israelis were disgusted to learn that Bill Clinton was originally scheduled to scarf up \$500,000 to speak at the Israeli president Shimon Peres's 90th

birthday festivities in June. I guess being good friends with Peres and brokering the accord that won Peres the Nobel Peace Prize were not reasons enough for Bill to celebrate. The Israeli branch of the Jewish National Fund had agreed to donate half a mil to the Clinton foundation. Isn't the J.N.F. "supposed to plant trees with donor cash?" Haaretz chided before the fund pulled back. "I guess money does grow on trees."

I never thought I'd have to read the words Ira Magaziner again. But the man who helped Hillary torpedo her own health care plan is back.

In an article in this newspaper last week headlined "Unease at Clinton Foundation," Nicholas Confessore and Amy Chozick offered a compelling chronicle about an internal review of the rechristened Bill, Hillary & Chelsea Clinton Foundation that illuminated the fungible finances and tensions between Clinton loyalists and the foundation architects Magaziner and Doug Band, former bag carrier for President Clinton.

You never hear about problems with Jimmy Carter's foundation; he just quietly goes around the world eradicating Guinea worm disease. But Magaziner continues to be a Gyro Gearloose, the inept inventor of Donald Duck's Duckburg.

"On one occasion, Mr. Magaziner dispatched a team of employees to fly around the world for months gathering ideas for a climate change proposal that never got off the ground," Confessore and Chozick said.

We are supposed to believe that every dollar given to a Clinton is a dollar that improves the world. But is it? Clinton world is a galaxy where personal enrichment and political advancement blend seamlessly, and where a cast of jarringly familiar characters pad their pockets every which way to Sunday.

Efforts to insulate the foundation from potential conflicts have highlighted just how difficult it can be to disentangle the Clintons' charity work from Mr. Clinton's moneymaking ventures and Mrs. Clinton's political future," Confessore and Chozick wrote.

The most egregious nest of conflicts was a firm founded by Doug Band called Teneo, a scummy blend of corporate consulting, public relations and merchant banking. Band, a surrogate son to Bill, put Huma, a surrogate daughter to Hillary, on the payroll. Even Big Daddy Bill was a paid adviser.

As this newspaper reported, Teneo worked on retainer, charging monthly fees up to \$250,000 and recruiting clients from among Clinton Foundation donors, while encouraging others to become foundation donors. The Clintons distanced themselves from Teneo when

they got scorched with bad publicity after the collapse of its client MF Global, the international brokerage firm led by the former New Jersey governor Jon Corzine.

And Chelsea is now shaping the foundation's future, and her political future. So there may not be as much oxygen for her troublesome surrogate siblings.

As George Packer wrote in *The New Yorker*, Bill Clinton earned \$17 million last year giving speeches, including one to a Lagos company for \$700,000. Hillary gets \$200,000 a speech.

Until Harry Truman wrote his memoirs, the ex-president struggled on an Army pension of \$112.56 a month. "I could never lend myself to any transaction, however respectable," he said, "that would commercialize on the prestige and dignity of the office of the presidency."

So quaint, Packer wrote, observing, "The top of American life has become a very cozy and lucrative place, where the social capital of who you are and who you know brings unimaginable returns."

The Clintons want to do big worthy things, but they also want to squeeze money from rich people wherever they live on planet Earth, insatiably gobbling up cash for politics and charity and themselves from the same incestuous swirl.