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Obama's First State Dinner

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 25, 2009 NCR Today

Yes, I have been distressed lately that President Obama has not done more to honor his pledge to ensure that the health care reform bill contains no federal funding of abortion. And, like many on the left, I have been distraught that more has not been done to push for cap-and-trade legislation or immigration reform or higher taxes on the rich. But, let?s take a minute to gush over him. Last night, at the state dinner, he looked fabulous. And Michelle ? OMG! Not since Jackie Kennedy greeted guests to the White House has a First Lady been so glamorous you could almost hear the heads turning as she walked into the room.

I also thought the comments of the Indian Prime Minister were noteworthy. He mentioned, in referring to the Nobel Peace Prize, how President Obama had changed the entire perception of the United States in the world. The decision to bring the terrorists to justice in a court of law will only enhance that perception. Indeed, the right wingers who think the trials in New York will be a propaganda platform for Al-Queda (as if the internet wasn?t enough) but they have it completely backwards. Those trials will be a propaganda victory for the rule of law. Guantanamo, not the New York Federal Court, was the propaganda victory for the terrorists. And, the President?s decision to go to the Copenhagen summit on climate change is yet another signal to the world that the U.S. is again worth looking up to.

No one should put overmuch stock in that fuzzy thing known as ?world opinion.? It will not stop a terrorist from perpetrating an act of terror, nor will it force Mugabe or Ahmadinejad or Kim Jong Il to relinquish power, nor will it coerce the Chinese to stop aiding the criminals in Darfur. But, it seems beyond doubt that all of our foreign policy objectives are made easier when we live up to the ideals we claim as our own, not in the impossible cases like Korea or Iran but in those many, many countries where a finger on the scale might set them on a better path. We are right to curry favor abroad. And, when we do so looking like a million bucks, all the better.

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