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Blast From the Past: Rahm Emanuel

Michael Sean Winters | Jul. 23, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

This week, I overheard someone on MSNBC ? I couldn?t be sure who as I was in the other room cooking, but it was a liberal, maybe someone from the Nation ? question whether or not Obama?s was a ?failed presidency.? Eric Alterman, who has made a career out of questioning the liberal credentials of those who do not share all of his views, has been mouthing off similar nonsense. This, mind you, in the same week that the President signed a sweeping financial reform bill to serve as a bookend with his health care overhaul. The other day, a commenter heaped scorn on my reference to the Upper West Side ethos, but it exists and, yes, Alterman lives there and is one of its principle advocates. This phenomenon of liberal disappointment with Obama recalled a passage in Joanthan Alter?s ?The Promise? in which Rahm Emanuel displays his disgust for those liberals who do not understand that some of their moderate colleagues do not share their views.

?When certain liberals, imitating tea-party conservatives, floated the idea of running TV ads against foot-dragging moderates they considered DINOs (?Democrats in name only?), Rahm was vicious. But even mild efforts to make the bill more progressive brought out the ward heeler in him. ?Let?s be honest,? he said. ?The goal isn?t to see whether I can pass this through the executive board of the Brookings Institution. I?m passing it through the United States Congress, with people who represent constituents.? Rahm?s voice dripped with disgust for those dainty Democrats who imagined they were above politics. ?I?m sure there are a lot of people sitting in the shade at the Aspen Institute ? my brother being one of them ? who will tell you what the ideal plan is,? he said. ?Great, fascinating. You have the art of the possible measured against the ideal.??

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