Seven Fiscal Cliff Nightmares That Haunt John Boehner's Sleepy Time Time

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by Michael Matthew Bloomer, December 10, 2012

[caption id="attachment_2964" align="alignright" width="294"]

"I see dead budgets!!!"[/caption]

John Boehner, the wily Speaker of the House, is trying to simultaneously outthink and outmaneuver virtually everyone during the battle over the so-called "fiscal cliff."

- He knows he has to stay well within shouting distance of his naughty teenagers who comprise the 70 or so Tea Party back benchers, and Paul Ryan's apparent lesson learned from his recent shellacking in the election is to go farther to the right. Tea Partiers remain steeped in bug juice. Moreover, they can cause much more ruckus than their small number implies.
- Also on his watch list is Mr. Grover Norquist, the man for whom every probem is a tax and every solution is a tax cut, in good times and in bad. Combined, tightfisted Tea Partiers and Mr. Norquist form a formidable block of blunt force that ought to be under Boehner's control, he is Speaker of the House after all, and Norquist never ran for anything. But that fifth column within his GOP caucus can still scuttle Boehner's hopes for a fiscal cliff compromise, although he may be comforted by Pul Ryan's and Eric Cantor's support for his fiscal cliff proposal. Yet, just as General Lee had his Longstreet, Lincoln his McClellan; Speaker Boehner has both, and more, a Tea Party and a Grover.
- Another sleep-disturbing worry for Speaker Boehner is the percolating riot among the GOP money men. Their hundreds of millions went pretty much nowhere in the recent election. Money men do not like that. Boehner, I'm sure, is hearing from them. They want something out of this Congress, and it ain't higher tax rates.
- Not far behind all these dark scenarios, the Speaker can be removed on the first day of the next Congress. If in the present lame duck session, for example, Boehner is thought to be bungling the fiscal cliff negotiations, or, worse still, reaches an agreement by cobbling together a slim and shaky coalition of Democrats and Republicans, Tea Partiers may see an opening. If so, they'll spend the brief Christmas break plotting Boehner's overthrow.
    - Recently, for example, Tea Party nut, Congressman Tom Price of Georgia, was rumored to be interested in challenging Speaker Boehner, but just a few hours ago his spokesperson Ryan Murphy tried to quash that talk: "Congressman Price is not running for speaker." But who is it who said, "Never believe anything until it's officially denied."?
- Another possibility for Boehner's removal exists within the House rules as they have developed over time. It's never been done, and it *is* unlikely, but then again who could have predicted outgoing Tea Party Congressloons Alan West, Todd Akin, or Joe Walsh? So, anything can happen with this group of irresponsible loons, and here's how, from the *Jefferson's Manual:*
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> **§ 315. Removal of the Speaker. A Speaker may be removed at the will of the House, and a Speaker pro temporare appointed,** *2 Grey, 186; 5 Grey, 134.*
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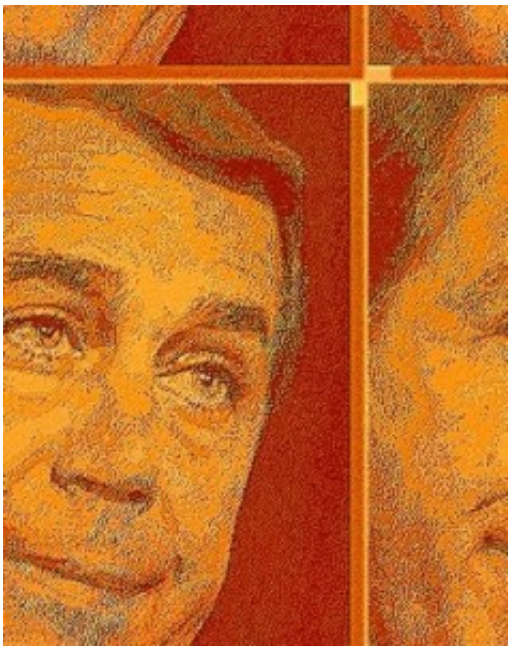

Out of sync[/caption]

A resolution declaring the Office of Speaker vacant presents a question of constitutional privilege (VI, 35), though the House has never removed a Speaker. It has on several occasions removed or suspended other officers, such as Clerk and Doorkeeper (I, 287–290, 292; II, 1417). A resolution for the removal of an officer is presented as a matter of privilege (I, 284–286; VI, 35). The Speaker may remove the Clerk, Sergeant-at-Arms, and Chief Administrative Officer under clause 1 of rule II.[1. Jefferson's Manual, § 315. Removal of the Speaker.]

- Next on the list of things keeping Mr. Boehner rolling from side to side in his sleep are visions of the American public and *their* wishes. Of course, Boehner's not alone among his party in persistently ignoring what poll after poll discloses, in this case, the 60-65% support for raising tax rates on those earning more than $200,000 or $250,000 (depending on marital status).[2. *Trio of polls: Support for raising taxes on wealthy*, Paul Steinhauser, *CNN Politics*, Dec. 6, 2012.] 53% of respondants in a recent Washington Post-PEW poll would blame Congressional Republicans for failure to avert the fiscal cliff which most believe would have a major impact on the country and their families. Only 27% would blame President Obama[3. Fiscal cliff attitudes, Post-Pew poll Nov. 29 - Dec. 2, 2012, Washngton Post, Published Dec. 4, 2012.] . . . Although, as we've learned, Republicans are stupifyingly arithmetic challenged - witness Paul Ryan's budget math - but 53% to 27% must have Boehner awake at night weeping.
- Finally, the GOP "plan" for fiscal cliff negotiations are a glass half empty, no, wait, completely empty. The spending cuts Republicans offer include gutting Medicare and Medicaid, both especially unpopular.[4. House GOP offers plan to avoid fiscal cliff, but

White House says no, Dana Bash, Jessica Yellin and Tom Cohen, *CNN*, Dec. 4, 2012.] Their ideas for "revenue enhancement" (they no longer say "tax increases" - Heh Heh) most notably include closing loopholes, specifically those loopholes they will not get specific about. Also among their revenue sources is gains they anticipate from raising the eligibility age for Medicare. Their ideas are mathematically laughable attempts to use the backdoor to make major inroads toward shredding much of the safety net. Oh, and also, all of which are quite unpopular, with distaste for eligibility age increases at the 60% level among people between 30 and 63, with *no difference* between Democrats or Republicans surveyed - so, even their own GOP base is offended.[4. *Raising Medicare age saves money for taxpayers but could lead to higher premiums for seniors*, AP, Dec. 4, 2012.]

Night sweats, nightmares . . . John Boehner needs a break. Will Norquist, or Ryan, or Cantor oblige?

Or is *this* in the Speaker's future?

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