

## Emails show Clinton acting like Clinton

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### Body

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Years from now, when historians go to write the definitive story of Hillary Clinton's 2016 bid for the White House, the trove of hacked emails released by the anti-secrecy group WikiLeaks will be a rich vein to mine.

But it's likely that the emails taken from the personal account of Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta will only serve to cement the already widely held perception that the former secretary of state is cautious, deliberative and risk-averse.

And her campaign is shaped in that image. Is it any surprise, for instance, that the campaign spent 12 hours agonizing over whether to send a single tweet?

As CNN notes, Clinton's policy advisers and communications staffers endlessly debated how to weigh in on the fight for a higher minimum wage. The tweet was to be signed by Clinton herself, with the customary "H," amping up the pressure to get it right.

The argument also involved whether to include the #Fightfor15 hashtag - staffers weren't sure about taking that explicit a stance.

If you have ever spent any time around political campaigns, or read about them, there's nothing particularly new here.

It's standard for news releases and statements to be batted around between ground-level staffers and upper-echelon advisers before they're finally made public. In many cases, the candidate himself or herself will make the edits, extending the process.

That's as true of a campaign for the state Legislature as it is of a race for governor or Congress.

But when the White House is on the line, you can take the usual level of neurosis, amplify it by a factor of 1,000, and still not get close to the way staffers seem to sweat Clinton's every public utterance.

The emails also reveal that Clinton, even when caught red-headed, is apology-averse.

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Take, for instance, the months that elapsed before she finally offered a carefully parsed apology for using a private email server when she was the Obama administration's top diplomat.

As The Wall Street Journal noted last week, Clinton partisans "dearly wanted her to apologize" for using that private server.

The email exchange from Podesta's account generating the most sound and fury is on one featuring Clinton's communications director, Jennifer Palmieri, about religious conservatives, that critics have tried to portray as anti-Catholic.

If you haven't read the 2011 exchange, it's worth reading in full. The nickel-tour version finds Palmieri, who then was the head of the left-leaning Center for American Progress, and another CAP staffer, John Halpin, both of whom are Roman Catholic, grouching about the behavior of some of their co-religionists.

"I imagine they think it is the most socially acceptable politically conservative religion. Their rich friends wouldn't understand if they became evangelicals," Palmieri tells Halpin as they gossip about media mogul Rupert Murdoch (who appears not to be Catholic) and his third wife raising some of their kids Catholic and having them baptized in the Jordan River.

Halpin shoots back: "Excellent point. They can throw around 'Thomistic' thought and 'subsidiarity' and sound sophisticated because no one knows what the hell they're talking about."

If you're an evangelical Christian, the snobbishness no doubt grates. But I've met Catholics equally annoyed at the tendency of some evangelicals to dismiss them as one level above snake handlers when it comes to religious legitimacy.

But anti-Catholic? Hardly. Illustrative of the inner workings of Clinton's campaign, and the mindset of some Catholic staffers? Definitely.

Trump and others on the right have also seized on a comment Clinton made about "open borders," and tried to make it about immigration.

"She said she dreams of an America with open trade and open borders," U.S. Rep. Lou Barletta, R-Pa., one of Trump's most vocal supporters, said last week. "A country could not survive both."

But Clinton's comments came in the context of a free-trade zone in the Western Hemisphere, similar to the European Economic Community, not immigration.

All you have to do is take a look at Clinton's website, and it becomes clear she's far from in favor of open borders.

If there's anything approximating a "smoking gun" from the seemingly endless Podesta email dump - and this one's a stretch - it's the close level of coordination between the Center for American Progress and Clinton's campaign.

The left-leaning think tank, which the right loves to hate, effectively serves as an idea factory for Clinton's campaign.

The emails reveal that CAP's president and CEO, Neera Tanden, who worked with Clinton when she was first lady and U.S. senator from New York, was in close contact with Podesta on a variety of issues.

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There has long been a tendency by activists on the left to denounce the network of think tanks and policy shops that have helped advance the conservative agenda over the last decade and a half.

Think ALEC or the Heritage Foundation. The Podesta emails have made it plain that the left has an equivalent, shadow operation that coordinates just as closely with politicians on their side of the fence.

And if one is illegitimate simply because they disagree with the ideas it espouses, progressives should think long and hard before they cast stones.

## Notes

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