

## Human Sacrifice on the Hill

**F**irst lady Hillary Rodham Clinton, who has been groping for a role since health care reform collapsed, has started a newspaper column. The special Whitewater committee has something else in mind for her. It wants to make her the target of its stale summer stock investigation.

Clinton told a friend, who told former White House counsel Bernard Nussbaum, that she thought nobody should rummage through Vincent Foster's office after he died. That, at least, is what Nussbaum's former deputy says Nussbaum told him.

Human sacrifice is much in vogue right now. The Republican right thinks that people who get on its nerves, especially women, should be sent to the stake, even in this heat—which may explain some, although not all, of the madness transpiring in the Capitol these days.

The Tories think that their front-runner, Sen. Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.), should light a fire for his chief of staff, Sheila Burke. She is a woman with a past—that is, she used to be a liberal Democrat. They do not want a chief of staff in a Republican White House who is "a militant feminist." The tribunes of the right have piled on unanimously. Sheila Burke is cool and formidable with an air of authority understandable in a former nurse, but she will not do. She is pro-choice. Nobody is sure, by design, what her boss is.

Paul Weyrich put his objections in the most insulting formulation possible. "She is a feminist who has mastered the art of manipulating the Senate majority leader. Men of his generation don't know how to handle aggressive women." In other words, the man who aspires to be the leader of the Western world can't stand up to a female staff member.

Friends say Burke minds the attacks, but has no intention of being driven out. Dole has done everything but change his name to make the right happy for the primaries, but if he were to offer Burke up on the altar of conservatism, he could probably forget about the women's vote in the general election.

Another woman under fire is Barbara Boxer, a Democratic senator from California who has made the preposterous suggestion that Sen. Bob Packwood (R-Ore.), diligent grabber of women, be treated like an ordinary human being—that is, stand up and give an account of himself at public hearings. He is, after all, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee and occupied in welfare reform, which means telling poor

women how to conduct their lives with restraint and circumspection.

Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), chairman of the Senate ethics committee—which last May found "substantial, credible evidence" against Packwood—gave the Senate a taste of gangsta rap: He threatened to reopen Chappaquiddick and charges against Thomas A. Daschle of South Dakota, the Democratic leader.

Underlying all this, of course, is a variation on the theme that fires the Whitewater committee. As Alfonse M. D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and his merry men think they are proving that Bill Clinton does not deserve to be president, Republican members of the Senate are united in their belief that if any public figure in Washington is to be humiliated for sexual misconduct, it should be Clinton, not a Republican.

Clinton is enduring a double trial by hearing in a city that has become a paranoiac's paradise. As the senators labor to prove that Hillary Clinton masterminded a plot to stonewall an investigation into the affairs of Vincent Foster, her good friend and law partner at the Rose Law Firm, House members hope to show that Bill Clinton's appointees made a murderous shambles of dealing with cult members in Waco, Tex.

The charge that they conspired successfully to cover up the details of Foster's death causes mirthless laughter at the beleaguered White House. "They're saying this staff could do that?" marveled one.

Ironies abound. The one administration official who was right about the disaster in Waco was fired—for his role in Whitewater. Then-Deputy Treasury Secretary Roger C. Altman wrote a memo warning that the tear gas under consideration for use in the raid was bad for children. His advice was ignored.

You never would guess from the way the Republicans are acting that their fortunes in next year's election could depend in some measure, with female voters, on how they treat Hillary Clinton, Sheila Burke and Barbara Boxer. Elephants never forget. But they seem to have forgotten all about the gender divide opened up by Anita Hill not so long ago.

Correction: Richard Ben-Veniste, minority counsel for the Senate Whitewater committee, was misidentified in this column on Sunday. He was on the staff of Watergate special prosecutors Archibald Cox and Leon Jaworski. He never worked for Bernard Nussbaum of the House Impeachment Committee and later White House counsel.