

***Time to Give 'em Hell***

***By Mel Lavine***

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Sprinting across the country for money and votes, the president is working around the clock to win back the hope he inspired four years ago. Recently when Obama came on stage to deliver his stump speech at the Fox Theater in Redwood City he was in the 18th hour of a 19-hour day, according to the New York Times.

“He is running against himself as much as Mitt Romney, or rather two versions of himself – one the radical ruining the country conservatives see, and the other the savior of the country he promoted last time around and has struggled to live up to,” the paper said

The Washington Post columnist E. J. Dionne Jr. wants Obama to stick to the hustings but change the strategy as in "Give 'em hell, Barack!" Dionne says Obama should take a page from Harry Truman's 1948 campaign book by running against the "do nothing" Republican Congress of our own day.

Truman had it tough, maybe tougher than our first black president who has exceeded 50 percent only once in two years in New York Times/CBS News polls. Sixty-four years ago the Democratic party was torn apart - southerners bolted and formed a Dixiecrat party with a presidential candidate of their own. Lefties, taking the name Progressive, departed as well and nominated a former vice president as their champion.

The polls said New York's Republican governor Thomas E. Dewey would be an easy winner. But Truman didn't let up, traveling the country by train, making whistle stops and lambasting the "Republican do-nothing 80th congress" along the way. In November he scored an historic upset, defeating Dewey by a 114-electoral vote margin.

As Truman was setting out on his journey he said, "It will be the greatest campaign any president ever made. Win, lose, or draw, people will know where I stand."

"What Truman taught," wrote Dionne "is that Americans would rather see a president with the strength to fight than a politician with such sensitive sensibilities that he leaves all the tough stuff to others."

In his biography of our 33rd president, David McCullough wrote, “No president in history had ever gone so far in quest of support from the people, or with less cause for the effort, to judge by informed opinion. Nor would any presidential candidate ever again attempt such a campaign by railroad.”

The train is not the way to go in 2012, but the issue’s the same and as timely as when Harry Truman rode the rails and, as McCullough put it, “would reveal the kind of man he was.”

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