



EDWARD EDWARDS

'Can't Anybody Here Play This Game!?'

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Across the country, college campuses are under siege amid increasing demands for the deployment of National Guard troops to disperse the protesters and demolish their encampments....the influx of tens of thousands of immigrants has blown a hole in several large city budgets to meet demands for housing, food, medical care and employment...

inflation remains stubbornly high along with prices of everyday commodities...With the median cost of a new home exceeding \$380,000 and mortgage interest rates above seven percent, the American dream of home ownership is out of reach.

Fear not, however, Scranton Joe is on the case, flying around the country telling friendly audiences that things have never been better. The 65 percent of Americans who believe the country is headed in the wrong direction would disagree.

The strategy, though, has become embedded in the Biden re-election campaign. At its most fundamental, it involves constant denial, urging the American people to disbelieve their eyes and ignore their life experiences.

It has even led the Administration into picking a fight with executives at the New York Times, accusing the newspaper of covering actual political events rather than using its news columns and commentary pages to promote the Biden agenda. This will not end well.

The strategy reflects accepting the reality that the president is a flawed candidate and will succeed only by turning reality on its head and driving a narrative that the nation is in the best shape it's enjoyed in years under Biden.

It is all a matter of "messaging," they argue, building a more compelling narrative capable of overcoming dismal job performance and issue polling numbers.

Continued denial is the foundation on which it all rests, accompanied by the fervent hope that presumptive Republican nominee former President Trump will be convicted in at least one of the trials he faces and sent to jail.

The president's campaign brain trust has carefully scripted his schedule, confining it to supportive pre-selected audiences — often organized labor groups — while scrupulously avoiding the more freewheeling interactions with rally crowds and especially reporters.

With his history of forgetfulness and rhetorical flights into fanciful tales from his past, his appearances are often exercises in breath holding lest greater attention is drawn to his physical and cognitive miscues.

An increasingly restive media has become more outspoken in its criticism of the refusal of the president to hold a news conference or to engage in a one-on-one interview session with the leading print and electronic news outlets.

In response, the White House — in a remarkable display of amateurish justification — recently loudly touted his first one-on-one interview which turned out to be a half hour yuking it up with shock jock Howard Stern. Posing tough policy questions is not Stern's forte.

The campaign, however, remains unmoved by reporters' grumbling and grouching and has stuck doggedly to its game plan of light scheduling and responsive audiences certain to applaud and chant at the opportune moments.

The denialism strategy, though, appears here to stay, whether it is from the briefing room podium, the president himself, congressional and party leaders even though polling data suggests it has had little benefit thus far.

He remains deeply unpopular and has been unable to close the yawning gap in his approval/disapproval status on the issues most troubling to the country – inflation, economy, immigration, crime and foreign policy.

Even more concerning is his trailing Trump in a hypothetical matchup by a range of a half point to as much as six points.

It is an unmistakable sign that voters are dissatisfied with his performance when – as the incumbent – he is at great risk of losing re-election to an individual under four state or Federal indictments, facing protracted trials and legal entanglements but, according to a CNN poll, whose Administration is recalled more fondly as of greater competence and economic contentment.

Gone are the initial whispers of replacing Biden on the ticket; that ship has sailed. Throwing the nomination to an open convention would dissolve into chaos that would inflict lasting damage on the party, an admission that the president should have been persuaded to step aside many months ago and a successor groomed.

It is, of course, tempting to lay blame for the campaign's current state of affairs at the doorstep of White House staff, advisers and the president's political confidantes. Given some of the decisions reached and strategies developed, that argument has some validity. A higher degree of professionalism and an experienced hand on the rudder may have navigated the stormy waters into safer port.

In 1962, Casey Stengel managed the New York Mets through a season the team lost a record 120 games. In frustration, Stengel cried out: "Can't anybody here play this game?"

Perhaps his question should be directed toward the Biden campaign team.

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