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Comment

Hillary hazard ahead

Obama better off without Clinton in cabinet

Home&Abroad

Andrew Cohen



Canada & world insight

Hillary Rodham Clinton for Secretary of State of the United States of America?

If the reports are correct, Barack Obama is preparing to name Clinton, the most popular woman in the country, to the most senior position in his cabinet.

But if Obama has decided to appoint Clinton, he should reconsider. And if Clinton has decided to accept, she should reconsider. For both, the appointment would be a mistake.

If Obama really wanted Clinton in his White House,

he could have made her his vice-president last August. He did not choose her because they had no personal chemistry and because she would have contradicted his mantra of change. She is the Washington insider; he is not.

Many thought Obama was wrong. They said that because Clinton had won 18 million votes in the primaries and caucuses — almost as many as he did — he had to appoint her as VP or risk alienating fellow Democrats.

They warned that rejecting her would drive her loyalists into the arms of John McCain. That fear was groundless — her supporters were never going to vote for the Republican ticket, especially one which included the anti-feminist Sarah Palin.

Obama decided to break with the Clintons, who have dominated the Democratic Party since 1992. He did not

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need her or her husband, who diminished himself in her campaign. It was a wise decision, though when Palin joined McCain and gave the Republicans a momentary surge in September, some Nervous Nellies worried that Obama had erred in choosing Joe Biden. He didn’t.

So why choose her now? No doubt she is competent, compelling and the best known woman in America. She has impeccable credentials.

But her appointment wouldn’t set a precedent — there has been a woman, indeed a black woman, lead-

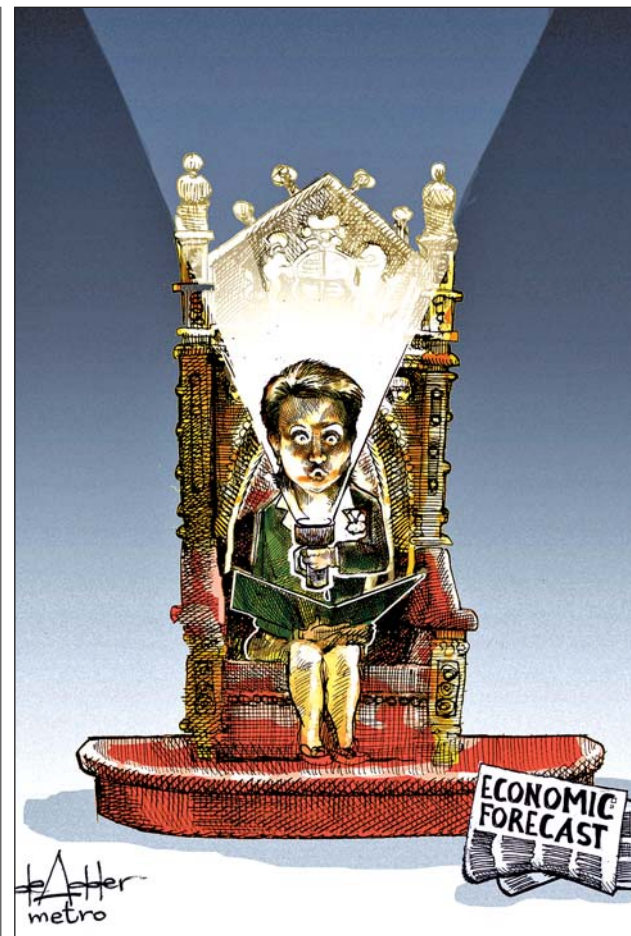
ing the Department of State for the last four years — and Clinton would steal Obama’s thunder. Moreover, her husband and his mysterious business interests could be trouble.

Worse, if Obama and Hillary were to fall out on a matter of policy, he couldn’t fire her. It would rupture the party.

And why would she take the job? She would have to resign her seat in the Senate and give up leadership on health care and other social issues that motivate her. She would miss the opportunity to replace the ailing Edward Kennedy as the country’s great liberal lion.

Obama should choose someone else for Foggy Bottom. Hillary Clinton brings more dangers than benefits.

Andrew Cohen, a professor and journalist, is the author of *Extraordinary Canadians: Lester B. Pearson*.



MICHAEL DE ADLER

Views

Former child soldiers reach out to victims



Susan McClelland

Kabba Williams sits quietly, his hands folded in his lap. The 24-year-old’s wide smile belies the horrors he has inflicted on others and of which he is also a victim. Sitting beside Williams is Mariatu Kamara, now a 22-year-old college student in Toronto. Kamara is an all too emotional reminder for Williams of his past. She was only 12 in 1999 when rebels in Sierra Leone’s 11-year-long civil war invaded her village. Child soldiers held the young girl hostage for nearly a day and then amputated her hands before setting her free.

“I did this,” Williams, looking briefly at Kamara, told the audience at the University of Alberta last week. “I did terrible things.”

Rape, murder, cutting off people’s hands.”

Williams was not the child combatant that tortured Kamara. But for nearly three years, Williams was a boy soldier — in fact, he’s one of the youngest child soldiers ever recruited in an African conflict, having been abducted by rebel forces at the start of the Sierra Leone war in 1991 when he was only six years old.

Last week at the University of Alberta’s Festival of Ideas, Kamara and Williams, now an outspoken human rights advocate in Sierra Leone who speaks on the use and victimization of child soldiers, came together for the first time.

“It was scary at first,” says Kamara, whose memoir *The Bite of the Mango*, which I wrote, was released last month. “But what can I do to him...to the boys who did this to me? My hatred toward them is only hurtling toward me, so I have to forgive.”



Mariatu Kamara

I have been involved now with the Sierra Leonean community for several years. I am struck by their inherent ability to tell their stories, hold one another and build community. I was by far more nervous of the meeting between Kamara and Williams than they were. When they first saw each other, they embraced. To anyone looking on, they appeared like old friends.

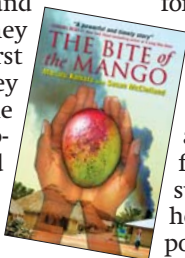
But they’re not. Sierra Leone saw children commit some of the worst atrocities in the war that ended in 2002. Tens of thousands of young people were killed, maimed, raped and recruited by various rebel groups, including the Revolutionary United

Front. Worldwide, the United Nations estimates that there are 300,000 child soldiers at any given time.

Williams has been very active in Sierra Leone’s peace building process. His newest project involves former child soldiers reaching out to the villages in Sierra Leone. “It would be an apology, a way we can say we take responsibility for what we did, and how do we move forward together,” says Williams.

“It will be challenging,” Kamara concludes. “There are many amputees from the war still suffering with their health and with poverty. But we need to do whatever it takes to make sure war doesn’t happen again.”

Susan McClelland is an award-winning magazine journalist based in Toronto. *The Bite of the Mango*, her first book, has been nominated for an American Library Association, young adult, non-fiction book of the year.



Letters

Shahnaz Azarbehi, TORONTO

I have been a liberal supporter for the more than 25 years but have stopped voting since the last two elections because of sheer fatigue.

Look at all our parties and their candidates — an old-boys league. We need new blood, new ideas, fresh perspective, charisma. Someone we would be proud of, to represent us both nationally and internationally.

Michael Ignatieff is going to do no magic — the man reeks of high-class arrogance. And why is Bob Rae even being considered after what he did to Ontario when he was NDP. With one of these two heading the Liberal Party, I know I will not be voting for a long long time.

Bryan Heal, TORONTO

Re: Probe links youth violence to mental health neglect, Nov. 14.

The links between mental health and violence have long been raised by clinical and social scientists, youth agencies, and community advocates.

In raising the profile of the cause, we hope the recom-

mendations of McMurtry Curling to address the roots of youth violence are adopted so that real action is finally seen in communities at risk.

In a new approach, any provincial reorganization should consider a revised definition of “youth” so that young people transitioning from the childhood to adult mental health system no longer lose proven crime and homeless-prevention services simply because they have turned 18 and no longer qualify.

The “Roots of Youth Violence” is an excellent study with serious recommendations. The time is now for those involved to demand real action from the premier, and not allow this to be another report that ends up sitting in a library.

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