

Too many words, too little meaning

Warning—this post is somewhat political since it uses a politician as an example, and not in a flattering way.

In case you missed it on Tuesday, Sarah Palin endorsed Donald Trump in the campaign for Republican presidential nominee. Her speech (if in fact what she did can be called that) has been described as rambling, patriotic, fiery. What is has not been described as is clear (or meaningful for that matter). The New York Times has a great article, *The Most Mystifying Lines of Sarah Palin's Speech*, that analyzes different parts of the speech and interprets what Palin may have meant, a kind of Palin translation if you like.



Tossing up a salad

Following is an excerpt of Palin's speech (taken from a Washington Post article and transcript):

"Trump's candidacy, it has exposed not just that tragic ramifications of that betrayal of the transformation of our country, but too, he has exposed the complicity on both sides of the aisle that has enabled it, okay? Well, Trump, what he's been able to do, which is really ticking people off, which I'm glad about, he's going rogue left and right, man, that's why he's doing so well. He's been able to tear the veil off this idea of the system. The way that the

system really works, and please hear me on this, I want you guys to understand more and more how the system, the establishment, works, and has gotten us into the troubles that we are in in America. The permanent political class has been doing the bidding of their campaign donor class, and that's why you see that the borders are kept open. For them, for their cheap labor that they want to come in. That's why they've been bloating budgets. It's for crony capitalists to be able suck off of them. It's why we see these lousy trade deals that gut our industry for special interests elsewhere. We need someone new, who has the power, and is in the position to bust up that establishment to make things great again. It's part of the problem."

Here's how this paragraph could be rewritten for clarity:

Trump's candidacy has exposed all sorts of problems in politics and has shown people how the system really works. Seeing these problems has made people angry. Campaign donors have been dictating to the politicians they support, in order to keep our borders open to get cheap labor from Mexico. Also, the politicians have been creating bad trade deals that help special interests in other countries. We need a new type of politician who has the power to bust the establishment, which is part of the problem.

Notice the difference?

It's shorter, it gets to the point, and it avoids jargon and cliches.

Yes, I know, it no longer has "color." Palin is known for throwing in all sorts of colorful phrases such as "he's going rogue left and right." When giving a speech, the speaker has more leeway to use attention-getting phrases than in written communication. In Palin's case, her reliance on "color" overwhelms any message that she may actually be trying to deliver.

Palin has been criticized for delivering “word salad” speeches that toss together a bunch of words and phrases. Her speech on Tuesday seems a perfect example of this tendency.