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TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."



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TRANSCRIPT

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today on FACE THE NATION, what's with Obama and the left? The President drew a campaign-sized turnout at the University of Wisconsin.

PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA: We cannot sit this one out. We can't let this country fall backwards because the rest of us didn't care enough to fight.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Democrats had expected Republican opposition, but as the midterm elections loomed last week, the President was finding himself trying to rally the liberal base that propelled him into the presidency, a base that seems to have lost much of its enthusiasm for the new President. How deep does this dissatisfaction run? Where does it come from? We'll bring in three veteran office holders to talk about it: Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson and independent Vermont Senator Bernard Sanders, one of the most liberal members of the Senate.

Then we'll get analysis from CBS News consultant and Democratic strategist Jamal Simmons.

I'll have some final thoughts on Eric Sevareid, who brought what some today would consider a novel approach to news analysis. He actually thought before he spoke.

But first, Obama and the left on FACE THE NATION.

ANNOUNCER: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from Washington, Bob Schieffer.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. We want to begin this morning with some breaking news that's happened since your Sunday newspaper came out. The State Department this morning issued a travel alert to Americans about potential terrorist threats in Europe and urges all U.S. citizens to be extra vigilant when they are in public places in Europe--tourist spots, transportation hubs and so forth. U.S. and European security experts have been concerned for the last week or so that terrorists may be plotting attacks in Europe, similar to the 2008 attack in Mumbai, India. This is one step below warning Americans not to travel to specific places, but it's been some time since Americans were warned to take extra precautions when going to Europe. Apparently, Europe is considerably worried this morning about possible attacks. Britain's foreign office has upgraded its travel advice to its citizens going to France and Germany. So we will keep you informed as more details on this become available.

Well, now, to the political news which we're going to focus on this morning. In the studio this morning Vermont's independent Senator Bernard Sanders; in Albuquerque, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson; in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell.

Gentlemen, the President found himself last week trying to rally the people who were the core of his support in 2008, his liberal base. Yesterday, there was a good turnout of Democrats on the Mall in Washington. We have to say, not as big as that rally that Glenn Beck held, but a sizable turnout nonetheless.

Senator Sanders, I want to start with you first. You are proudly one of the most liberal members of the Senate. You're an independent and a democratic socialist actually is that-- is what you call yourself. So I want to just start by asking you. Why do people at your end of the political

spectrum seem so-- if not disenchanted, but rather unenthusiastic about the President that they supported so strongly in 2008. What's happened here?

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS (I-Vermont): Well, what's happened is, I think that people understand-- the President and the Democratic Congress have made very significant accomplishments, which-- which can't be dismissed: a health care reform, thirty million more people getting health insurance; the stimulus package which has changed national priorities created and saved two and a half to three million jobs; financial reform. That's nothing to sneeze at. But I think the concern is that despite all of that, the middle class in America continues to collapse, poverty is increasing and the gap between the very, very rich and everybody else is going wider. And you can do all kinds of good things. But if you have sixteen percent of our population unemployed, underemployed or have given up looking for work, you know what? We have a very serious situation. And I think there's a concern that the President hasn't seen that urgency, stood up for working families in the way we would like him to do and taken on the big money interests and said to the American people, exactly what FDR said in the 1930s, listen I am on your side. Their greed, their recklessness on Wall Street has caused these problems. I'm going to take them on. I'm coming to you. We're going to work together on a progressive agenda to expand the middle class.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Is-- is part of that, I mean, some on the left and some very strident voices on the left are saying the President was just looking for compromise too much with the-- with moderate Republicans rather than taking a stand and pushing through some of this stuff.

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS: No. I think in his heart, the President is a very, very decent guy. And he wants to do what most Americans want him to do--to reach out, bring people together. But what has happened is the Republicans have said no, no, no. They have waged more filibusters than any time in the history of this country. They have been the party of no and obstructionism. And at some point, what the President has got to understand they do not want America to succeed. They're into politics. His job is to rally the American people as he did in Wisconsin and say, we are going to create the jobs that we desperately need in this country. We are going to take on Wall Street. We are going to save Social Security. We are going to do something about the gap between the very rich and everybody else.

BOB SCHIEFFER: No. Now I-- I must interrupt you and say that that's a strong statement to-- to say. I mean, yes the Republicans are against the President's policies, but is-- is it really fair to say they don't want America to succeed?

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS: Yeah. I would say that given the choice between regaining power or obstructing the initiatives that create jobs that protect the American people--yes, I think gaining power is their major initiative. I'm on the floor of the Senate, Bob. And I've got to tell you every single day it's sixty votes to pass legislation. That is unprecedented in American history.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Let me go to Governor Richardson. Governor, you're watching all this from out there in New Mexico. You heard the vice president last week tell the left, it's top--time to stop whining and-- and to kind of get on the team and get on board here. How serious is this disaffection? Are-- are liberals going to stay home?

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON (D-New Mexico): Well, it's important that liberals, conservatives, moderates and the Democratic Party basically stop complaining and realize that we have a month to go. We've had some gains in the last months since Labor Day. But this is when voters are paying attention. And the first step we need to take, is energize the Democratic

base. And there's nobody better than the President and the vice president to go after that base of young people, of minorities, of independents that got the President elected. He's the best person to do that. But all Democrats, if there's one message that I want to send is that we should stop firing at each other. We've got enough people, the Republicans, firing at us already. So we not-- we don't need these divisions in the party. But what I would do, Bob, is stop talking about bills in Congress, financial overhaul, health care reform, bailouts, start talking about creating jobs and housing and-- and-- and making the American people recognize that we need to make investments in sagging industries and renewable energy and manufacturing. Jobs, work force development, connect with voters emotionally.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Well--

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: But more than anything, Bob, we-- we have got to come together and realize that we can't go back to those Republican policies of a horrendous economy and huge deficits.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, let me just ask you this. What is it do you think that the President did wrong here?

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: Well, I-- I believe that he has tackled the major issues. He has tackled the fact that we were heading into a depression and he avoided it. He's restored our standing internationally. I know that's not a big campaign theme but he's done that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm.

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: Wall Street-- the stock market is-- is coming back. There's still twenty million unemployed and underemployed, there's still foreclosures. There's no question that we've got problems. There-- but I saw the President in Albuquerque. He was here in some of these backyard chats, and the vice president. They're doing everything they can to energize the base. But I think we've got to stop talking about the Beltway and all the races in Washington. Yes, it's important, the Senate and the House. But, you know, they should listen more to governors, the Democratic Party. We're the ones creating jobs, renewable energy, movies in my state. Ed Rendell in-- in Pennsylvania has created a lot of jobs. Look at success stories in the states, in the grassroots with mayors, with county commissioners.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Okay.

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: It's not just the Washington, DC, party.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, Governor Rendell, you're up there in what is always a key state, Pennsylvania. A lot of those suburbs around Philadelphia that the President carried last time out looks like he's going to have the candidates, Democrats are going to have some real troubles there. What is it that has caused this drift away from the President in your view that we saw so many in-- independents were for the President in 2008, and also so many young people who so far-- despite that big rally that we saw out there in Wisconsin haven't shown much interest in this election. And that's-- it's going to be hard for all Democrats if that-- those groups don't turn out this time around.

GOVERNOR ED RENDELL (D-Pennsylvania): Well, there-- there's no question, Bob. And I think part of it is perception. I think the President has done a much better job than people perceive and including the base. I mean Time magazine had a wonderful piece two weeks ago

about how far reaching and changing our economy the stimulus was. I know you read it. And it's incredible what they're doing in renewable energy and-- and-- and all sorts of things that are important to us in the future that are in that bill but nobody knows it.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Well, why not?

GOVERNOR ED RENDELL (overlapping): So that-- that's per--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): That's-- I guess the question I'm asking is why have they been un-- unable to get that message out? And why have, you know, folks like the Tea Party on the other side of the spectrum where there's also great frustration, they have seemed to get the message out at least the other side of it. So why have Democrats been unable to do that?

GOVERNOR ED RENDELL: Well, two reasons, Bob. Number one, our-- ours is a complex message. The Tea Party message is pretty easy and simple and direct. Secondly, we just don't have it in our makeup, in our DNA to mislead the public. We don't go out there and talk about death panels. You know, the question you asked to-- to Bernie about is the Republican Party, the party of no, you thought that was a little extreme. Well look at the small business bill. Republicans have talked all summer about helping small business. And yet, there was a bill with thirty billion dollars of lending authority with elimination of capital gains on small businesses. And they held it up until Senator Voinovich cast the deciding vote. They held it up all summer long. It could have been helping small businesses three, four months earlier, had they acted responsibly.

BOB SCHIEFFER: President Clinton on this broadcast several weeks ago said, look, we wouldn't even be holding this conversation if unemployment was-- was five percent. Is this basically just the economy is really bad and the President happens to be the guy in office right now? And-- and when you're in office and the economy is bad, you're going to pay at the polls? Is that what basically is going on here?

GOVERNOR ED RENDELL: Bob, there's some of that. I have no doubt about it. There's some of that and every governor, every senator who is an incumbent is-- is feeling that. But our job in - in the next four weeks is to tell our base, our liberal friends, this is a choice. And the other choice is starkly bad for America and for the things you believe in. And remember, there's an old political adage. All we've got to do is get them to the polls because a tepid vote casts the same as a wildly enthusiastic vote.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Oh, well-- well-- Governor--

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON (overlapping): Bob--

GOVERNOR ED RENDELL: Yeah.

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON (overlapping): Well--

BOB SCHIEFFER: Gov-- let me just ask Governor Sander, I mean, Senator Sanders here. Are-- are liberals going to turn out because I hear a lot of people say, well, I just may not get around to voting this time around.

SENATOR BERNIE SANDERS: I-- I think you're going to see more progressives coming out than you otherwise would have. But I think in the next month what we have got to do is not only make it clear that the Bush agenda and the policies the Republicans want will be a disaster for America. We have got to bring forth a positive agenda. For example, we brought forth a bill on outsourcing. Under the Bush administration, we lost five million good-paying manufacturing jobs. Companies are throwing American workers out on the street then moving into China. People are going nuts about this. We have got to stand up bold and say corporate America has got to reinvest in America. In terms of tax breaks for billionaires, when the top one percent earns twenty-three percent of all income in America, they don't need tax breaks. As Ed Rendell said, we have to invest in infrastructure, transforming our energy system, social security. We have got to stand up and say no privatization, no cuts in Social Security--differentiate ourselves from the Republicans.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Bill Richardson, you were trying to get into the conversation there.

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: Well, I also think we should take on the Tea Party. For some reason, everyone is scared of them. What they really want to do to this country is when they talk about reducing deficits is, they're cutting in to Medicare, Medicaid, firefighters, teachers, nurses, people's benefits, Social Security. I think it's important that we not be defensive that we be strong. But we have to unify and stop the internal carping. It's important that we recognize that we not only have to attract our liberal progressive base but also the Democratic Party is moderates, it's conservatives, it's western Democrats, it's southern Democrats. It's important that we not be so concentric, so Washington based. And here I do think the President's efforts at going into backyards, at rallying the base and the vice president very strongly are being very effective, but the rest of the party seems to be doing their own thing. I think it's important that we talk and make those populist themes about--

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): What--

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: --creating jobs, about foreclosures. Not talk about all these Washington bills and initiatives that are happening.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Would--

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: The people want to be connected emotionally.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Would-- would Democrats have been better off had-- had the vice president not told the-- the left to stop whining? It seems to have had kind of-- it hasn't seemed to go down very well on the left.

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: Well, no. I think that's exactly what needed to happen. Sure, maybe it wasn't popular within the left. But it's important that we come together, that we not stay home. That we talk about the importance of not going back to the years of Republicans that brought us this recession. That brought us this unemployment. But it's not enough to say, okay, American people, give us credit because we, Democrats, prevented it from getting any worse.

BOB SCHIEFFER (overlapping): Let me ask--

GOVERNOR BILL RICHARDSON: You've got to be positive. You've got-- you've got to talk about jobs and you've got to talk about the economy. And you've got to connect with people emotionally.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Governor Rendell, do you think that as it stands now Republicans are probably going to take the House?

GOVERNOR ED RENDELL: I'm not sure. I think we're definitely going to keep the Senate. And I think we have a chance to win the House because I believe the Democrats, including the base, starting to come back. They're starting to realize that this is an alternative. It's not a referendum on how the President has done or how the Congress has done. It's an alternative. And Republican leaders have said if they control the House, the first thing they're going to do is issue subpoenas and have one investigation after another. If you're listening out there, Democrat, Republican or independent, that's the worst thing this country could undertake right now given all the challenges we face.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right.

GOVERNOR ED RENDELL: That's destructive.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, for the last couple of weeks we've been focusing on the Tea Party and some of the Republicans on this broadcast. Today we let the Democrats have their side.

We'll be back in one minute. Thanks, gentlemen for the discussion.

(Music at Washington, DC, rally)

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: And we're back now with Jamal Simmons, our new CBS News consultant on the Democratic side. Of course, Dan Bartlett, President-- former President Bush's old communications director, handles the Republican side for us here at CBS News. So Jamal, welcome.

JAMAL SIMMONS (CBS News Democratic Strategist): Good morning.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And-- well, you heard the discussion here. What do you think about these reports that it looks like Republicans are going to take the House and while they may not take the Senate, they might come very close. Is that-- do Democrats think that's possible?

JAMAL SIMMONS: Of course, it's possible. But if you take a look at what's actually happening on the ground, you really don't see that. People have been paying a lot of attention to these national polls. Even if you look at the national polls, Newsweek has one out today that basically has a tie with Democrats maybe a very little bit of ah-- little bit ahead, same thing with Gallup, Politico, there's a bunch of them that have the-- the polls closing. Why is that happening? Because if you look at a state like Ohio, where Governor Strickland has been running behind as much as double digits in Ohio. For two months, his opponent was airing ads by himself. Now Rod Strickland is airing his own ads in Ohio. And now if you see he's down by four points. If you look at places like California with Barbara Boxer, she's now ahead of Carly Fiorina. If you look at Washington with Patty Murray, she's now pulling up ahead. So the candidates at the candidate level are now starting to close these races as we get down to the final stretch. And the Democrats have a good feeling for them, too.

BOB SCHIEFFER: But-- I mean, here you have Barbara Boxer, a long-time Democrat. You say she's now closing.

JAMAL SIMMONS: Yeah.

BOB SCHIEFFER: And Patty Murray, she's running for what, her third term out there now closing? I mean just saying that tells you what-- a little bit about what the political atmosphere is out there.

JAMAL SIMMONS: The political at-- the atmosphere is tough. You know, no one has denied that. And Democrats are probably going to lose seats in this election. But if you take a look at losing the House or losing the Senate, it's very, very tough. Give you a couple districts, Travis Childers in Mississippi, a very conservative district, the John Tanner seat or Lincoln Davis in Tennessee, those two seats pretty conservative. The-- the Republicans aren't really blasting ahead in those races. They're actually holding on or even Stephanie Herseth out in South Dakota. Her opponent is now caught in a traffic ticket scandal. And so she's kind of having some trouble right now.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Mm-Hm.

JAMAL SIMMONS: If you look at these races state by state, Democrats are not in trouble. And I think we're going to have some enthusiasm that everyone is downplaying. You're starting to see that enthusiasm come back a little bit.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Why is President Obama having the troubles he's having with his base, with the liberal side of the Democratic Party?

JAMAL SIMMONS: You know, it's interesting. I think the President has done some pretty remarkable things. It's hard to argue with. The first Latino on the Supreme Court, the third woman to sit on the Supreme Court, at the same time, ending the war in Iraq, health care, financial regulatory reform, all these things. But what you haven't had is you haven't had, kind of a broad-based packaging of the message that really speaks to the-- some of the core issues of what Americans are concerned about. One, obviously, their jobs in the short term, but in the longer term there's a concern about competitiveness. Americans really are concerned about having a country where their children will do better tomorrow than they're doing today. And they're starting to worry about that. On the other hand, though, you have the Republicans who put out this Pledge to America, a week or so ago. They talk about competitiveness as being important but it's forty-eight pages. Twenty-something pages of it are pictures and-- and big words. But for forty-eight pages, they don't even mention that-- the word education. We're twenty-fifth out of thirty in math, we're twenty-first out of thirty and-- when it comes in science. And they don't even mention education. But they do want to take us back to 2008 spending levels. And if they take us back to that, there's a twenty-one percent cut in American education for kids. And that's just not going to help us close that gap. And Americans know that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: About a minute left here, Jamal. But quickly, do you think looking back on it, the President would have been better off he-- he had simply concentrated first on jobs and then move to some of these other issues like health-- health care?

JAMAL SIMMONS: You know hindsight is 20/20. I think, you know, health care has been such a dogged thing for Democrats to get done in the last forty years. There's an opportunity to do a big thing, cover thirty million more people which will happen. Yes, you look back and say jobs

are clearly important, they should be talking nothing about-- nothing more than about jobs right now. But, you know hindsight is 20/20. I also would have liked him to do campaign fin-- financial regulatory reform earlier. After these bonuses hit because you would have been better off if you had a chance to do that.

BOB SCHIEFFER: All right. Jamal Simmons, welcome to CBS. And we'll be hearing from you along the way.

JAMAL SIMMONS: Thank you for having me.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Be back in moment with some closing thoughts.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: Finally, last week the North Dakota Humanities Council asked many of us who were friends and colleagues of Eric Sevareid to come to Bismarck for a symposium on the life and work of this North Dakotan, who was such a towering figure in the history of journalism. What a pleasure it was to just pause and think about this man who had so much influence on all of us who've been lucky enough to be reporters during one of the most remarkable chapters in American history, the last half of the Twentieth Century and the beginning of the Twenty-First.

I was just a rookie in the Washington bureau when I first encountered him in 1969. And already, he was a story book character you couldn't have made up. One of Ed Murrow's boys, the reporters who invented broadcast journalism as they covered World War II. The dashing correspondent who later escaped a tribe of cannibals in the jungles of Burma, who went on to become the gray eminence who analyzed the news on Walter Cronkite's broadcast.

ERIC SEVAREID: This was Eric Sevareid in Washington.

BOB SCHIEFFER: Today, as we think about the vulgarity and the personal attacks into which so much of our national conversation has fallen--because too many have convinced themselves there can be only one side to every issue, their own--I cannot help but think about what Eric used to tell us that in a world of passionate certainty, it is as important to retain the courage of one's doubts as the courage of one's convictions. Eric was a wise man but he never fooled himself into believing he had all the answers and he never stopped the search to know more, which is, after all, the beginning of true wisdom.

Back in a minute.

(ANNOUNCEMENTS)

BOB SCHIEFFER: That's all for today. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.

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