

EMERSON ADVISORY

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WILL PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP PARDON CONRAD BLACK?

President-Donald Trump and Conrad Black are well acquainted with each other. As a faithful friend, Donald Trump attended the contentious and pivotal 2003 Hollinger shareholders' meeting at the Metropolitan Club in New York and spoke in support of Conrad Black, while shareholders angrily challenged Hollinger's underperformance and criticized Black's related party transactions. Trump and Black partnered in a proposed redevelopment of the Sun-Times building in Chicago. In 2000 Trump attended Barbara Amiel Black's famous birthday dinner at La Grenouille, and the Blacks were invited guests to their Palm Beach neighbour's wedding to Melania Knauss in January 2005. Black subpoenaed his friend Trump to give evidence on his behalf at his criminal trial in Chicago, but Black's lawyers wisely withdrew that invitation.

After his conviction, with the support of Brian Mulroney and Tony Blair, Black arranged for the former 41st President, George H. W. Bush, personally to deliver his petition for a pardon directly into the hands of his son, President George W. Bush. The 43rd President was in no mood to consider Black's petition. Nor did he accept the repeated requests of his trusted Vice-President Dick Cheney that he grant a full pardon to the Vice President's former chief of staff, "Scooter" Libby, who had been convicted at a jury trial of four counts of obstruction of justice and perjury. President Bush commuted Libby's 39 month prison sentence so he would not be incarcerated, but not his convictions nor fine. The special prosecutor for the Libby criminal proceedings was the highly regarded US Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald, who also laid the criminal charges against Black in Chicago. Both US Attorney Fitzgerald and Judge Amy St. Eve, who presided over Black's criminal trial, convictions and sentenced him to prison, were nominated for their positions by the 43rd President, George W. Bush, who refused Black's pardon.

During the election campaign, Conrad Black was initially hesitant to believe that Trump would be triumphant. After his election, the President-Elect has received wholehearted public endorsement and support from his friend

Conrad Black, and many others. In 2010, Margaret Wentz wrote, without attribution, that Black's rehabilitation was underway, as "the smart set is thinking twice. They are not so sure he's all that guilty any more, and is so, of what." Would one be surprised that Conrad Black may re-petition President Trump, and that, during his term, President Trump may grant Black a full pardon? After a pardon, Conrad Black would be able to accept a Presidential invitation and travel into the United States for dinner at the White House.

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