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## THEY SAID IT

“If we take the widest and wisest view of a Cause, there is no such thing as a Lost Cause because there is no such thing as a Gained Cause. We fight for lost causes because we know that our defeat and dismay may be the preface to our successors’ victory, though that victory itself will be temporary; we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph”

T.S. Eliot, *Essay on Francis Herbert Bradley*. 1927.

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## GEORGE AND THE TWO VLADIMIRS.

Someone spotted a great big woodpecker down in Arkansas, you know. Everyone thought this bird was extinct. Then some guy riding around in a canoe saw one. It was a *Campéphilus principalis*, better known as an Ivory-Billed Woodpecker. And now hundreds of people are headed for Arkansas to try to see it.

I can understand this. I felt the same way when I read some months back that an Italian journalist who described herself as a communist had escaped from the bad guys in Iraq. Wow, I thought, a communist in this day and age. I wanted to fly over there right away just to see her. I know that Communists are not as rare as one of those big woodpeckers. But they are a dying breed, nevertheless. So I couldn’t help but think how great it would be to see a real live one before they’re all gone.

Better yet, I thought, it would be really cool to talk to her. She could explain a lot of stuff I have never been able to understand, like Part III, Chapter IX, Section I of *Das Kapital*, which discusses the “degree of exploitation of labour-power,” or Part V, Chapter XVII, which delves into the “changes of magnitude in the price of labour-power and in surplus-value.” I mean, what could be more exciting than that?

But the big question I would ask her is when she thinks the global proletariat revolution is going to happen. Karl and Fred thought it had begun in 1848, and the way I understand it, they were tickled pink, so to speak. Then it petered out. And here we are a century and half later and this *rara avis* in Italy is presumably

still anxiously awaiting the big event. Estragon and Vladimir have nothing on this chick. In any case, if she thinks it's coming any time soon, I'd like to be short the market.

Arkansans say that things aren't the same now as they were when lots of those big woodpeckers were flying around. I feel the same about communists. Somehow, life seemed bigger and grander, and yet simpler, in the days when there were large numbers of them all over the world. The bad guys didn't skulk around caves wearing nightgowns. The big Reds could be seen on television all the time, with lots of medals on their chests, sitting on the balconies of large, imposing buildings in Moscow and Peking, with huge paintings of mass murderers and serial killers behind them, watching military parades. It was pretty impressive stuff. No one doubted that they were dangerous. But they surrounded themselves with iron curtains and they didn't get out much, which was nice.

There was something very modern about it all. Each side had these big armies, with lots of big airplanes, which carried really big bombs. They were always threatening to annihilate each other, which was the same as threatening to destroy the entire world, which could be kind of scary, if you thought about it. But most people didn't think about it much, since the political Pooh Bahs on both sides knew they'd be smoked right along with the rest of us if something like that happened, and this circumstance had an admonitory effect on them.

And now, just like the big woodpeckers in Arkansas, the big commies are all gone. Even Russia's Rootin' Tootin' Putin and China's little Ho Hung, or whatever his name is, aren't really communists anymore. They're just ordinary thugs.

This is, by the way, a very big deal, even though no one seems to realize this as yet. For almost two centuries, virtually all of the evil, murderous movements in the world traced their roots to the slums of post-revolutionary Paris, where men like Gracchus Babeuf, Armand Barbes, Martin Bernard, Philippe Buonarrotti,

and Louis Blanqui formed secret organizations with neat names like the Society of the Seasons, the Conspiracy of Equals, the League of the Just, which in turn formed the nascent political base for the eventual emergence and widespread, global acceptance of the "scientific" economics and crackpot social theories of Karl Marx.

From Europe to Russia to China and Africa, to the jungles of Latin America, the Philippines, and South East Asia, to the halls of academia in the major universities of the world, the word spread and the violence quickened, decade after decade, until tens of millions of innocents had sacrificed their lives to the utopian fantasies to which the little lady in Italy remains devoted.

There was a unity to it all. The ideology mutated somewhat as it spread across the globe. But its malignant goal of destroying freedom and erasing the concept that each individual has divine importance was the same everywhere, as were the deadly and deadening consequences. Today there is no such unifying ideological force around which the evil of the world unites, with the exception of a shared hatred for America, which is not ideologically based but has its origin in the much more ancient instincts.

There are, of course, vestiges of the old communist manifesto and ideology everywhere. But these have mostly taken the form of iconic images and slogans used by political thugs to motivate the ignorant masses to their cause of personal gain. This fact is little noted, but it is crucial to understanding what lies ahead.

In Russia, for example, many foreign policy experts publicly worry about a "return to communism." Others, like myself, see signs of budding fascism in the policies of Putin. But the most probable reason that people search for definitions and come up with different results is that we are all utilizing a vocabulary born during the "leftist" movements of the past 200 years.

The fact is that it would probably be more useful to seek words with an older etymology. Words like tyrant, despot, thug, and dictator would be more appropriate, since they carry no ideological connotation and bring to mind no particular form of government organization. Men like Putin, who are driven by nothing more complicated than a will to power and guided by no moral system beyond love of self, have been around since the beginning of recorded history, as has been well documented in the works of Herodotus and Thucydides, as well as in the *Holy Bible*.

The same is true of China. The thugs there share nothing with Putin other than a lust for power and a ruthlessness born of atheism. No communist ideology links them in some sort of global venture. They still pay public homage to past communist heroes, but not because of their ideological contributions but because their legacy provides some continuity to their policies of brutality and murder.

Putin is promoting nationalism as a competitor to freedom. This has always been a winner for Russian tyrants, but it has lost some of its appeal in a world where even the poorest peasant knows that something is wrong with a nation where the average life expectancy is dropping as rapidly as government corruption is rising. The Chinese are hoping that a government that provides widespread prosperity will be respected even if that government is oppressive and corrupt. The problem for China is that, in this day and age, prosperity is unlikely to be a permanent fixture in a nation that denies basic human rights to its citizens.

Experts on Latin America continue to write of the “leftist” threat to the region from Venezuela and Cuba. But this is mostly out of verbal habit. Neither Fidel nor his buddy Hugo Chavez are any more “leftist” than they are “rightist,” if these words are meant to convey an ideology or philosophy of government. They employ some of the language of the old communist days, such as “exporting revolution,” but for the most part they are cut from a cloth that is as old as time itself; they are simply self-serving thugs. They are intent on destroying neighboring democracies not out of a dedication to the expansion

of an ideological cause but because these pose a threat to their hold on power and their ambition for influence expansion.

Finally we come to the Islamists. This is arguably the only globally active, ideologically driven movement left in the world. But it has no home base. I offered the following comments on this shortcoming in an article published five weeks after the 9/11 terrorist incidents.

Leaders of political and military movements with grandiose plans to take on an entire civilization need real estate; they need places to hide and to scheme. Bin Laden had very little space to begin with, and now it is shrinking ever further. And this brings up an important point. Osama bin Laden is not a Hitler. Nor is he a Stalin, or a Mao Zedong. He is a man without a country. He has no large industrial base behind him, as Hitler did. Nor does he control the land mass and population of a Russia or a China. History will, I believe, view him as more of a Che Guevara-like figure, a spoiled revolutionary cult leader, rather than a founder or builder of a historically significant ideological movement.

Time will tell whether this latter prediction is correct. But it is important to keep in mind that the physical space in which Islamists can feel comfortable has diminished even further since I wrote those words, and it is likely to decline more in the next several years, especially if the Mad Mullahs lose power in Iran.

Militant Islam does, of course, have connections of convenience to various thuggish regimes around the world. But it has no true interest in common with any of the non-Islamic states or causes, other than a shared hatred for the United States and some practical ties related to the international drug trade.

Militant Islam’s relations with the two large, formerly communist states of Russia and China are complicated. On the one hand, there are reasons for affability, since these two giants have extensive commercial and geopolitical ties with such radical

Islamic states as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Syria, and Sudan, which provide succor to the Islamist movement. On the other hand, both Russia and China are intent on keeping radical Islam at bay both within and along their borders. And they are godless entities, which make them anathema to militant Islam.

In short, America's enemies and potential enemies are only loosely united, if at all. They form no Conspiracies of Equals or Leagues of the Just among themselves. They hearken back to simpler times, when evil was untainted by high-minded claims for the betterment of mankind. With the exception of the Islamists, they have no ideological vision whatsoever to peddle to their fellow countrymen, no alternative governmental system that can compete effectively with the prospects of participatory government, individual liberty, and the rule of law. And even radical Islam is hard pressed to convince the vast majority of Muslims that rule by religious fanatics who pay homage to a medieval code of cruelty is preferable to individual freedom and some form of democracy.

America is hated for promoting such modern ideas as the sanctity of the individual and the justness of allowing individuals to be free to utilize their God-given talents to the best of their ability. But the force behind the global reach of these ideas is more powerful even than the United States. It is, as President Bush maintains, an innate love for freedom coupled with technological innovations that have made people all over the world aware that freedom is not just desirable but possible.

As I said earlier, in many ways this is a much messier, more complicated world than the one that disappeared into the dustbin of history in 1989 along with the Berlin Wall. It presents the nation with a wide variety of threats, both direct and potential, from a diverse number of sources.

President Bush is the first President to recognize that this new world requires an integrated complex of foreign policy approaches. As part of his effort to develop and implement an appropriate package of initiatives, he has announced a controversial policy

of military preemption as a means of responding to nations that have the potential to harm Americans and American interests and appear to be preparing to do so. He has promised that America will aggressively promote democracy and liberty around the globe, based on the theory that open societies tend to be less threatening to world order than totalitarian regimes. He has implemented a policy of economic and political engagement with large, thuggish nations like Russia and China, which have the very real potential of posing a dire threat to U.S. interests both at home and abroad, but which have an equal potential to develop into friendly competitors in the global marketplace of goods and ideas. He has sought to require the nations of the world to choose sides in the war against militant Islam, in order to better decide how to deal with the smaller nations of the globe.

It remains to be seen whether this is the proper mix of policies, and whether they are being implemented with prudence and wisdom. But there is no question that these and similar tools are going to be the centerpieces of American diplomacy in the years to come, no matter who sits in the White House.

In the meantime, the world is unquestionably a much safer place today than it was in the days when America's enemies were united and motivated by a powerful ideological vision. It is still a dangerous world, filled with dangerous men and dangerous nations. And some of these men and nations have highly destructive weapons and will most assuredly use them against Americans and American interests in the future.

As T.S. Eliot remarked, there are no victories in the war against evil. But victories can be achieved in the various battles along the way, and the good guys won a big one when the communists went the way of the big woodpeckers in Arkansas.

No better evidence of this could be found than the recent pictures of President Bush and Vladimir Putin, side by side, watching goose-stepping Russian troops march by carrying banners featuring the visage of Vladimir Lenin. The latter Vladimir was a major

intellectual contributor to the cult of communism and one of the most prolific mass murderers of all time. The Vladimir who sat next to Bush at the parade is a common thug, who pays homage to his nation's communism past, just as birders do to the days of the big woodpecker, but, like them, can never hope to witness its return.

## DISINGENOUS DEMOCRATS.

Since last fall's election, there have been hundreds of pieces written about why the Democratic Party has, over the last couple of decades, fallen progressively from prominence to the point where it is now officially the nation's minority party. Many of these stories, including several by Mark and me, have focused on the Democrats' inability either to understand or appreciate most Americans' religious beliefs and the policy positions those beliefs lead them to embrace. Others, particularly those pedaled by the Democrats themselves, have focused on the party's inability to communicate its ideas to voters.

Still others, including an excellent piece written by neocon conspirator extraordinaire Victor Davis Hanson and published last Friday by *National Review Online*, have noted that Democrats have been unwilling to acknowledge changes in political, social, and demographic trends and have therefore been unable to modify either their rhetoric or their political strategies, relying on the old standbys – class, race, age and Vietnam – despite the fact that most of the voting public long ago moved beyond the standard liberal formulations on such issues.

Unquestionably, most of these explanations contain at least a kernel of truth and certainly help explain in part the Democrats' acute fall from grace. But all also appear to miss a rather basic, fundamental, seemingly obvious, nonacademic point that may have more to do with the Democrats' growing unpopularity than anything else, but which is rarely, if ever even mentioned. All things considered, the Democrats'

biggest problem may well be that the vast majority of Americans, even a great many who nevertheless still vote Democratic, consider the party and its standard bearers to be entirely disingenuous.

No one likes a *poseur*. And for the better part of the last three decades, the public representatives of the Democratic Party have been just that, platitudinous fakers, embracing and disseminating thoughts, ideas, and policy prescriptions that they clearly do not believe, but which they cling to in the hope that they will somehow appear thoughtful, clever, or benevolent.

Now, I know that the obvious counter to such a charge is that all politicians and, therefore, all political parties are, to a certain extent, disingenuous; that politics involves making promises that are rarely kept and which paint pretty, if somewhat dishonest pictures of candidates and their prospective policy positions in order to “convince” as many voters as possible. While perhaps a little overly cynical, that is certainly not an entirely inaccurate description.

But in this case, I'm not talking about your standard, run-of-the-mill political disingenuousness, the kind that more often than not is a byproduct of the policy-making process and the give-and-take necessary to be an effective politician. I'm not even talking about the kind of disingenuousness that would induce the self-styled “party of the poor,” champion of the working class, and scourge of privilege to nominate a billionaire, Boston Brahmin, Swiss prep school graduate for President and a multi-millionaire trial lawyer for Vice President, or to make a physician who grew up in the Hamptons and whose father was a senior partner at Dean Witter the chairman of such a party.

No, I'm referring to a much more profound and yet evidently transparent insincerity that has been responsible for convincing voters and prospective voters that the Democratic Party and a succession of its most prominent politicians have no core values, stand for nothing substantive, believe nothing deeply or earnestly, and will say anything that they believe will make them look better in the eyes of the public.

This type of disingenuousness was on display last week, when two former (and presumably future) Democratic presidential candidates and a handful of Democratic-friendly academics and journalists presented their thoughts on the present state of the Middle East and their expectations for the region's future. These thoughts were collected in a special Middle East and war on terror edition of the left-leaning political publication *The Washington Monthly*.

As *OpinionJournal* editor James Taranto noted, some of the submissions were modestly reasonable, but many were shocking both in their venom and their ridiculousness. Among both the most venomous and most ridiculous was that proffered by former Democratic presidential wannabe, retired general, and Clinton stooge Wesley Clark. The highlight of Clark's offering read as follows:

Democracy can't be imposed – it has to be homegrown. In the Middle East, democracy has begun to capture the imagination of the people. For Washington to take credit is not only to disparage courageous leaders throughout the region, but also to undercut their influence at the time it most needs to be augmented. Let's give credit where credit is due – and leave the political spin at the water's edge.

If this sounds a little strange to you, it should. Recall that Clark, like most of the rest of the Democratic establishment, insisted until just recently that the effort to bring democratic reform to the Middle East was little more than a pipe dream and that the Bush administration had led the nation to war based on this ridiculously and unjustifiably optimistic vision of the world.

Indeed, the same Wesley Clark who now insists that “democracy has begun to capture the imagination of the people” of the Middle East, and that this capturing of imagination has nothing whatsoever to do with President Bush's efforts in the region, once called the idea that Saddam Hussein's removal from power would permit democracy to “bloom in Iraq and across the

Middle East” “wishful thinking.” Today, Clark may be convinced that democracy has always been the destiny of the Arab people, but as a presidential hopeful he saw things a little differently.

Of course, in Clark's defense, he is hardly alone in this transparent and feeble attempt at instantaneous revisionism. In the same issue, Williams College political science professor Marc Lynch took his own shot at painting Bush out of the changing environment of the Middle East. To wit:

One of the most misleading ideas out there has to do with the supposed novelty of Arab demands for democratic reforms. The conventional wisdom that the invasion of Iraq triggered the first public Arab conversations about democracy is just flat wrong. Arabs have been talking about the need for reform and protesting against the status quo since long before the Iraqi war . . . Iraq, and Bush, may have helped to open up some political opportunities (and to foreclose others), but credit for the so-called Arab spring should go to the Arab intellectuals and activists who have long been pushing for change for their own reasons.

What Clark, Lynch and other like-minded Democrats appear not to understand is that this type of partisan denigration of American accomplishments only serves to make them look petty, inconsequential, and ill-suited for leadership. It may reasonably be argued that one of the principle reasons that the nation's voters do not trust Democrats on matters of national security is the fact that too many Democratic partisans have shown that they simply do not understand America's role in global events, are contemptuous of American power, and are therefore prone to bouts of politically motivated revisionism that explain away the importance of American national security policy.

While certainly Perpetual-Vietnam-Syndrome (PVS) is the chief component of this lack of trust, another key factor is the Democrats' response to and explanation

for the end of the Cold War, an explanation which was both anti-American and largely based on fiction rather than fact.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, nearly everyone on both sides of the conflict understood intuitively that the breakdown was due in large part to the policies implemented during the three terms of the Reagan presidency (2 under Reagan; 1 under Bush). As declassified documents from both sides of the conflict attest, the decisions to starve the Soviets of cash, to force them to compete in a weapons race they couldn't afford, to encourage dissent behind the Iron Curtain, to speak the truth about the regime's nature and deeds, and to confront the "evil" that was Communism were all instrumental in toppling that heinous regime.

Nevertheless, the left in this country has, by and large, been unwilling to give credit where credit is due. Instead of acknowledging Reagan's resoluteness and vision, Democrats and their supporters have instead chosen to deny any American contribution to the "victory," crediting the fall of Communism to historical forces (partially true) and the "farsighted" Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev (largely untrue). Recall that it was Gorbachev, not Reagan, who was *Time* magazine's "Man of the Decade" for the 1980s. Recall as well that such Democratic luminaries as former Clinton Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott (who was also largely responsible for Gorbachev's "Man of the Decade" honor) insisted that Gorbachev was the real hero of the Cold War and that Reagan's only role was almost to miss the opportunity presented by the bold, innovative, and reform-minded Gorbachev.

Needless to say, most Americans, not to mention most Eastern and Central Europeans, disagreed with this *post hoc* assessment offered by Talbott and the rest of the washed-up fans of détente.

OpinionJournal's Taranto notes that when "Reagan died last year, hardly anyone was still claiming" that the Cold War was won in spite of, not because of the 40<sup>th</sup> President. Taranto is, of course, right, but only in a limited sense. What Taranto doesn't acknowledge

is that this change of heart on the part of liberals only served to damage the Democrats' credibility even more. The American people are not as stupid as many Democratic and Republican elites would like to believe, and they were not fooled by last summer's gushing praise from former Reagan detractors like John Kerry.

For Kerry and the Democrats, Reagan's death came at an exceptionally inopportune time, namely smack dab in the middle of a hotly contested presidential campaign, one in which their opponent was considered by many to be "the heir to Reagan's legacy."

Given the deep and obvious affection most Americans bore for Reagan and the appreciation they had for the role he played in strangling global Communism and ending the Cold War, the Democrats knew that they could hardly afford to repeat the petty belittling of Reagan's contributions and risk being seen as disparaging a beloved national icon upon the occasion of his death. But rather than simply keep their mouths shut and allow the moment to pass without comment, the Democrats fell all over themselves to sing the praises of the man whom they had, for better than two decades, identified as the font of all iniquity in the Western world. And they made themselves look particularly creepy and opportunistic in the process.

Of all the prominent Democrats, only Jimmy Carter, by far the worst ex-President in the nation's history, had the decency to be honest about his feelings for Reagan, preferring to wallow in his own bitterness than join the very public and very affected Democratic love-in. Based as it was in petty resentment, Carter's disposition was hardly commendable. But at least it was honest, and that is far more than can be said for the contrived fawning engaged in by most of the rest of his fellow Democrats.

It should be said, though, that "contrived fawning" is hardly the most contemptuous behavior in which today's Democrats have engaged as they pursue their public and private ambitions. Another reason why many voters believe the current crop of Democratic

politicians to be so terribly insincere is the tendency that a great many of them show to abandon not just their principles, but their purported friends as well when it suits their personal and political ends. This habit has been rather vividly displayed at least a couple of times over the last several weeks.

Last month, for example, former President Bill Clinton demonstrated once again that any number of the Democratic Party's luminaries are more than willing to insult and belittle erstwhile favored constituencies if it advances their causes. In Clinton's case, the "cause" was personal and involved his wife's political career. And the insults and belittling were undertaken rather aggressively.

In response to disclosures that Arthur Finkelstein, a gay Republican consultant, has set up a political action committee to help defeat Hillary in her campaign for re-election to the Senate next year, Clinton attacked Finkelstein personally, making specific reference to the consultant's sexual orientation. Even the *New York Times* reported that Clinton "lashed out" at Finkelstein, with the former President suggesting that the Republican must be motivated by his homosexuality and must therefore be "blinded by self-loathing."

Now, had this been an isolated incident, it would, in and of itself, be of little significance, simply reinforcing the truism that Bill Clinton's first and foremost priority is always Bill Clinton and that anyone who stands in his way is likely to get trampled. But, of course, it was not an isolated incident. Taken in conjunction with the swipes taken at Mary Cheney, the Vice President's lesbian daughter, by both John Edwards and John Kerry during last fall's campaign, Clinton's tirade may well be seen as evidence of a pattern of behavior among Democratic elites.

Though it would probably be unfair to call Clinton, Edwards, Kerry, or any other prominent Democrat "anti-gay," these incidents taken together tend to suggest that there is what James Taranto has called a "gay-baiting *trend* among Democratic politicians." (emphasis in original)

And gays are not the only allegedly respected coalition partners the Democrats appear willing to "bait" in pursuit of their agenda. Also last month, Congressman Charlie Rangel, the ranking member of the House Ways and Means Committee, gave a speech to a group of supporters and African-American retirees in which he attacked President Bush's plans to reform Social Security. According to the *New York Sun*, among other things, Rangel said, "We have to get rid of the bums that are trying to take it [Social Security] away from us – people who sleep with Bush, Cheney, Wolfowitz, and the rest of them."

One can understand why Rangel would want to associate Social Security reform with the President; it's his plan after all. And one can understand why he'd want to associate reform with the easily (at least among Democrats) demonized Vice President. But why, pray tell, would he want to associate it with the *former* Deputy Secretary of *Defense*?

There can be only one reason why anyone would think that Wolfowitz is in any way relevant to the Social Security debate. And as *National Review's* Jay Nordlinger noted, that reason doesn't speak too highly of Rangel or of the depths to which he'll stoop to score a political victory. Paraphrasing a Mark Steyn piece from which I myself quoted twice last month, Nordlinger concludes that Rangel's invocation of Wolfowitz almost certainly stems from the fact that the former Deputy Secretary's name "begins with a scary animal and ends Jewishly."

As with Clinton, Edwards, and Kerry above, it may be unfair to call Rangel an anti-Semite, but clearly he is not above Jew-baiting. And this incident, taken in conjunction with the Democratic Party's periodic spasms of anti-Israel and anti-Zionist sentiment since September 11, suggests that there is a trend here as well.

As with the de facto gay-baiting trend, the Jew-baiting trend may not be enough to put the majority of Jewish voters off the Democratic Party, but it almost certainly is enough to cause independent voters to question the Democrats' sincerity and therefore to align

themselves with another party, either permanently or on an election-by-election basis. There is no question that the Democrats talk a good game on protecting minority interests, but their actions with regard to those interests nevertheless suggest a certain mendaciousness.

In closing, I would just point out that this disingenuousness is not exclusively of recent vintage and therefore may help to explain the Democrats' prolonged slide, not just their present troubles. The recent death of feminist icon Andrea Dworkin serves as a powerful reminder that the Democratic Party's opportunistic disingenuousness is nothing new, since the party has, over the last three decades, modified its views even on such cornerstone questions as "women's issues" in an attempt to mollify and entice political and moneyed interests.

Dworkin, you may recall, was one of the more important left-wing feminists of the last quarter century, and she was also essentially nuts. Among other things, Dworkin and her colleague Catharine MacKinnon helped radicalize the feminist movement, making it part and parcel of the greater post-modern movement, and pioneered the legal theories that greatly expanded the definition of "sexual harassment" in the workplace.

Dworkin called sex an act ownership in a "mode of predation" and repeatedly labeled all male heterosexuals "rapists." But for all her intellectual faults (and they were many) at least she continued throughout her career to understand the threat that pornography posed to women. And this is more than can be said for the vast majority of her liberal cohorts.

There was a time when the feminist movement and the Democratic Party that supported it agreed with Dworkin that pornography specifically and the exploitation of women in general were serious problems. But after an influx of cash from folks like Hugh and Christie Hefner and their Playboy Foundation to party coffers and to political action groups like Emily's List, NOW and NARAL, the feminists in the Democratic Party suddenly lost

interest in the idea of censoring pornography. Indeed, over time they actually came to embrace it as one of the more honest expressions of one's First Amendment rights.

Today, the Democratic Party retains the label of the "party of women," yet it is hard to find any "women's issue" they champion other than abortion. Though party leaders sell themselves as champions of the feminist movement, in practice their "feminist" agenda very closely mirrors the "dream world" envisioned by the porn kings who have been so generous with their financial support, i.e. sexually "liberated" women; repercussion-free sex; cheap, readily available birth control; and abortion on demand.

Until the day she died, Andrea Dworkin believed that pornography constituted the subjugation of women by male oppressors. She was half right. If she had come to understand that this subjugation is undertaken not just by males but by females as well and under the protection of the "feminists" in the Democratic Party, then she'd have had a clearer picture both of challenges she and other anti-porn feminists faced and of the utter fraudulence of the Democratic Party's claim to the mantle of "champions of women."

All throughout the presidential campaign last year, Democrats and their sympathizers complained incessantly about the fact that their guy was the only one effectively labeled a "flip-flopper," despite the fact that President Bush occasionally changed his position on issues as well. They also complained that the label was worn out and trite since it had been applied to Bill Clinton and Al Gore before John Kerry.

What these complainers never quite figured out is that the label fit Kerry better than Bush because Bush was seen as having core values that were immutable, regardless of changes on policy positions, while Kerry was seen as lacking core values altogether. Kerry had an exceptionally difficult time expressing what he actually believes and in dispelling the perception that his allegiance on any specific matter could be swayed simply out of political expediency. And in this, he was a metaphor for the entire modern Democratic Party.

It is no coincidence, in other words, that Clinton and Gore were susceptible to similar charges, since they too appeared to value political advantage over consistency of beliefs.

The fact of the matter is that over the past couple of decades, Americans have been conditioned to expect that the leading lights of the Democratic Party will alter their positions on such issues as the Cold War, the war on terror, the war in Iraq, pornography, Social Security reform, etc., if they believe that there are political points to be scored.

For a certain segment of population, such pliability is fine, since it is, in these folks' collective opinion, a sign of a subtle mind able to process and reassess policies as new information becomes available. But for an equally large and growing segment of the population, this "flexibility" is hardly a plus. In their collective opinion, it is little more than a sign of dishonesty and a betrayal of trust. And if you're looking for an explanation as to why Democrats continue to lose elections, this loss of trust may be as good as any you are likely to find.

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