

KERRY AND DEAN REPRESENT THE CONTINUATION OF LEFTISM IN DEMOCRATIC PARTY, NOT ITS TRIUMPH

By Don Feder

With this year's national nominating convention in Boston, John Kerry as the nominee and former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean as the man who almost staged an upset in the primaries, there's talk of a takeover of the Democratic Party by New England-style liberalism – epitomized by the pointy-headed Harvard professor and the Vermont Birkenstock Bolshevik.

True, (with the honorable exception of New Hampshire) New England is quite possibly the most liberal section of the country.

We have the highest number of colleges and universities per capita, and the lowest church attendance. Massachusetts' congressional delegation could pass for the Red Brigade. Vermont was the first state to mandate civil unions. Massachusetts was the first to issue marriage licenses to homosexuals.

But a takeover?

To say that Dean and Kerry have imposed their liberal values on the Democrats is like saying that Saudi Arabia has fallen to Islam, or the current leadership of the National Organization for Women is turning it into a rabid feminist group, or Ted Kennedy is starting to put on weight, or Barbra Streisand is beginning to babble.

The national Democratic Party has marched in lockstep with the loony left for decades. Kerry and Dean represent a continuation of bolshevism-as-usual, rather than its triumph.

Kerry is rated one of the most liberal members of the United States Senate. During the primaries, by the time Dean stopped frothing at the mouth, he had managed to make Kerry look a staid establishment figure.

But Kerry and Dean represent a departure from what – Al Gore's balanced approach to the environment? The integrity of Walter Mondale.?

The pro-business posture of Mike Dukakis? The America-first foreign policy of Jimmy Carter? This fiscal responsibility of George McGovern?

Bill Clinton was reputed to be a New Democrat. But rumors of his moderation were greatly exaggerated. Only a Republican Congress kept him from raising taxes his last six years in office. Monica's playmate slashed defense spending while pushing new entitlement programs. His judicial nominees – including Supreme Court Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer -- were the most liberal ever appointed to the bench.

The last conservative left in the Democratic Party (and he barely has a foot in the door) is retiring Georgia Senator Zell Miller, whose book – “A National Party No More” -- laments the Democrats steady leftward drift. Miller has endorsed George Bush for re-election.

Conservatives – even those moderately conservative, or conservative on a single issue -- are as rare in the Democratic Party as synagogues in Saudi Arabia. Robert Casey, two-term Democratic governor of Pennsylvania, was a true blue-collar welfare statist. But Casey, who was also a traditional Catholic, broke ranks with his party on abortion.

Casey's pro-life advocacy made him a pariah in the party of inclusion. Despite being the governor of the fifth largest state at the time, Casey was barred from speaking at the 1992 Democratic National Convention.

Connecticut Sen. Joe Lieberman is another moderate-by-reputation only -- based on his tendency to occasionally express skepticism about racial quotas, and castigate Hollywood for splattering brain-matter and flashing flesh on the screen.

All of that changed when he became the Democratic vice presidential candidate in 2000, whereupon Lieberman discovered that he had always loved reverse racism and thought the movie industry was doing an exceptional job of entertaining and educating our children.

The roll call of Democratic luminaries reads like Jane Fonda's Christmas card list: Ted Kennedy, Jesse Jackson, Al Sharpton, Joe Biden, Dick Gephardt, Hillary Clinton, Maxine (burn, baby, burn!) Waters, John Edwards, Robert Reich, etc.

The non-partisan National Taxpayers Union rates members of Congress on every vote impacting on taxes, spending, debt and regulatory burden – in other words, upsizing government. In its latest ratings, the NTU tabulated 287 votes in the House and 269 in the Senate.

In 2003, the average Senate Democrat scored 19 % -- meaning the party as a whole voted against America's taxpayers 81% of the time. (House Democrats did slightly better, with an average score of 24%.) House Republicans voted for the taxpayer on 63% of all votes cast. Republican senators voted against big government 73% of the time.

By the way, Kerry had an NTU taxpayers' rating of 14% – making him one of the biggest spenders in the Senate, but only 3 percentage points lower than the average for his Democratic colleagues in that body.

The American Conservative Union does it's own Congressional rating based on votes on defense and social issues, as well as taxes and the economy.

Last year, the average Senate Republican scored 80%, compared to 18% for the average Democrat. Kerry got 13 % in 2003 -- more liberal than most Democrats, but not dramatically so. (His lifetime rating from the ACU is 5%, based on almost 20 years of slavish devotion to the welfare state, isolationism, emasculation of the military and Hollywood's social agenda.)

Thus, it may be seen that a yawning chasm exists between the parties on the size and scope of government, the amount of their earnings Americans will be allowed to keep and whether America will be defended. This ideological gulf isn't a recent phenomenon, but spanned most of the post-war era.

What groups have had the most influence on the national Democratic Party over the past 30 years? The Democrats' core constituency includes The Sierra Club, NOW, the ACLU, NAACP, AFL-CIO and National Education Association – not organizations normally associated with limited government, fiscal restraint, individual responsibility and traditional values.

The National Education Association (brainwashing r us) boasted that its members comprised 10 percent of the delegates at the 2000 Democratic Convention. For Democratic presidential candidates, speaking at an NAACP

or an NEA convention is like a hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca) for a devout Moslem.

The liberal takeover of the Democratic Party has been an ongoing project. In the '60s, Democrats embraced high taxes, welfare spending and government as an all-purpose panacea. In the '70s and '80s, they went gaga for isolationism and a Lilliputian military. In the '90s, it was racial quotas, feminism (comparable worth legislation, women in combat), abortion on demand and gay rights. Today, they are manning the barricades to stop a Constitutional amendment defining marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

Instead of being the engineers, Kerry, Dean, Kennedy and Barney Frank are passengers on a runaway train barreling down the track at breakneck speed. (Next stop, Utopia!) The course was determined long ago.