

Kerry and Dean: Democratic Leftism Continued

By Don Feder

With this year's national nominating convention in Boston, John Kerry as the nominee, and Vermont's former governor 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 LIKE a staid establishment figure, BY COMPARISON. But do Kerry and Dean represent a departure from the Democrats' status quo? From Al Gore's balanced approach to the environment? FROM The integrity of Walter Mondale? FROM the pro-business posture of Mike Dukakis? FROM the America-first foreign policy of Jimmy Carter? FROM the 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—are 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.

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Conservatives—even those moderately so, 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, a traditional Catholic, broke ranks with THE DEMOCRATS on abortion, which 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 senator Joe Lieberman is another moderate-by-reputation only—based on his tendency to express occasional skepticism about racial quotas, and castigate Hollywood for splattering brain-matter and flashing flesh on-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 (NTU) rates members of Congress on every vote impacting taxes, spending, debt, and the regulatory burden—in other words, upsizing government. In 2003, the average Senate Democrat scored 19 percent—meaning the party as a whole voted against America's taxpayers 81 percent of the time. (House Democrats did slightly better, with an average score of 24 percent.) House Republicans SIDED WITH the taxpayer on 63 percent of all votes cast. Republican senators voted against big government 73 percent of the time. Kerry had an NTU taxpayers' rating of 14 percent,

making him one of the biggest spenders in the Senate—but ranking only 3 percentage points lower than the average for Democratic senators.

The American Conservative Union (ACU) does its own Congressional rating based on votes on defense and social issues, as well as taxes and the economy. Last year, Senate Republicans scored 80 percent, compared to 18 percent for Democrats. Kerry's lifetime rating from the ACU is 5 percent, based on almost two decades of slavish devotion to the welfare state, isolationism, emasculation of the military, and Hollywood's social agenda.

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 defend herself. This ideological gulf isn't a recent phenomenon, but has spanned most of the postwar era.

Which groups have had the most influence on the national Democratic Party over the past 30 years? The Democrats' core constituency includes the National Organization for Women, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the AFL-CIO, and the National Education Association—not organizations normally associated with limited government, fiscal restraint, individual responsibility, and traditional values.

The National Education Association boasted that its members comprised 10 percent of the delegates at the 2000 Democratic Convention. For Democratic Presidential candidates, speaking to the NAACP or an NEA convention is like a pilgrimage to Mecca for a devout Muslim.

The liberal takeover of the Democratic Party has been an ongoing project. In the 1960s, Democrats embraced high taxes, UNRESTRAINED 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 fight the definition of marriage as the union between one man and one woman.

Instead of being the engineers, John Kerry, Howard Dean, Teddy 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.

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[Sidebar to preceding piece]:

Mass Destruction

High taxes, SUPER-SIZED government, extravagant spending, an imperial judiciary, and weird social experiments are the Democratic Party's weapons of *Mass* destruction. All were field-tested in the Bay State.

Massachusetts's current Congressional menagerie includes Senator Ted Kennedy, Barney Frank, James ("I love Fidel") McGovern, Ed Markey (who misses the Sandinistas), and Rep. Marty Meehan, who accused Bush of "grandstanding" as he rallied the nation after 9/11.

According to the NTU, the Massachusetts Congressional delegation is more dedicated to taxes and spending than is Vermont Representative Bernie Sanders—the only avowed socialist in Congress. Massachusetts is as much a one-party state as North Korea. The Democrats have had a 50-year stranglehold on the state legislature. The GOP, which caucuses in a broom closet, can't even muster enough votes to force roll calls or sustain a veto.

Like our politicians, our colleges and universities come from another galaxy. There's more anti-Americanism on Massachusetts' campuses than in the streets of Tehran or Ramallah. MIT linguist Noam Chomsky thinks Hamas are the Minutemen of the Middle East and Israel is Nazi Germany in a prayer shawl. Howard Zinn, Boston University professor emeritus, blames America for every act of aggression since the PELOPONNESIAN War, and thinks Chomsky is a moderate.

If it was up to a majority of the Harvard faculty, America would have a marginal tax rate of 100 percent for annual incomes over \$80,000, the Pentagon's budget would be transferred to Health and Human Services, George Bush (take your pick) would be tried for war crimes, and we'd be paying reparations to African Americans, Asian Americans,

Native Americans, and Hispanics. Michael Moore would be head of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Even our cities and towns aren't immune to this lunacy. Cambridge and Amherst have their own foreign policy. (Each has disavowed "Bush's war" in Iraq.) Boston has its own immigration policy. (Several years ago, the city announced that its employees would no longer cooperate with the Feds in their search for illegal aliens.)

Above all, Massachusetts is a monument to GARGANTUAN government—a cold-climate Cuba. We have the fourth highest per-capita state and local tax burden in the nation. There's a state income tax, a sales tax, a meals tax, and an auto-excise tax. CURRENTLY, the Massachusetts' legislature is working on a way to tax air. That section of the Mass Turnpike between Framingham and Boston (roughly 20 miles) is the most expensive stretch of toll road in the nation.

Not all of the state's boondoggles are locally financed. Boston's Big Dig, two miles of roadway running under the city (on which construction was completed this year), cost a staggering \$14.6 billion—up from an initial estimate of \$4 billion in inflation-adjusted dollars. This platinum-plated project was more than double the cost of the Panama Canal, in today's dollars. And while Massachusetts' politicians dreamed it up (it was a parting present to Tip from his Congressional colleagues), almost 60 percent of the total cost will be paid for with federal tax dollars.

The lethal combination of real estate taxes and regulations on new construction has driven the cost of housing through the roof. In a survey conducted by *Mass Inc* magazine, Massachusetts' residents rated affordable housing their number one concern. In the same poll, 40 percent said their financial situation was fair or poor. Massachusetts is coming to resemble an old Eastern bloc state—with an elite at the top, huddled masses on the bottom, and no one in between.

In the cradle of the American Revolution, the nanny state reigns supreme. Republican Governor Mitt Romney recently signed into law a statewide ban on smoking in public places. But every year, 20,000 potheads congregate on the Boston Common for a so-called Freedom Festival, where they toke up in full view of the city's police.

The state where the shot heard around the world was fired has the most draconian gun laws in the land. In 1998, there were 1.5 million licensed firearms owners in the

Commonwealth. Today, there are fewer than 300,000. Illegal possession of a SINGLE shell casing (forget the gun) is punishable by up to two years in prison. In its vigilant efforts to keep citizens from defending themselves, Massachusetts even requires a license to possess a can of pepper spray.

There's one more Democratic ideal fully realized in Massachusetts—a judiciary detached from both Constitutional restraints and reality. In May, the Supreme Judicial Court (the highest court in the Commonwealth) mandated homosexual marriage. A few years earlier, the SJC told organizers of Boston's St. Patrick's Day Parade that they had to accept a gay contingent. That was too much even for the U.S. Supreme Court, which unanimously reversed the decision.

The edicts of our state's high court read like the National Lawyers Guild on speed. In one of its more other-worldly decisions, the court held that nude dancing was protected speech. A dissenting justice speculated on the content of the message conveyed by the gyrations of strip-club performers. While he's attending the Democratic nominating convention, Bill Clinton may wish to conduct a fact-finding mission to The Golden Banana club.

Gone is the Massachusetts of Pilgrims and Puritans, of Minutemen and Tea Parties, of John Adams and Calvin Coolidge. If the militias of Lexington and Concord showed up at the Fleet Center for the Democratic bash, they'd be branded a bunch of right-wing, racist gun nuts and forced to undergo sensitivity training.

The Kerry Democrats have big plans for America. Massachusetts is a sneak preview. A decade ago, the Commonwealth unveiled a new license PLATE with the slogan: "The Spirit of Massachusetts Is The Spirit of America." God forbid.

—Don Feder. An earlier version of this piece appeared at *FrontPageMagazine.com*.