

LEFT WANTS TO SHUT DOWN MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

By Don Feder

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Could the left be any clearer about its intentions? Why don't liberals just put on brown shirts and arm bands and march around bonfires, consigning radios to the flames, to the rousing strains of "Hillary Uber Alles"?

Since the left can't compete in the marketplace of ideas, it wants to shut it down.

The aborted push to revive the misnamed Fairness Doctrine, and apply it to talk radio, is but the latest example of liberalism's drive to gag the opposition.

Late last week, the House of Representatives – Nancy Pelosi's House – voted 309-115 to prohibit the Federal Communications Commission from using federal funds to impose the Fairness Doctrine on stations that carry Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, et al.

It's not that the Democrat-controlled House has suddenly become a bastion of First Amendment champions. Rather, after the display of talk-radio's effectiveness in the immigration debate, the body – all of whose members will be up for reelection next year – feared swift and bloody retribution at the hands of America's most consumer-responsive medium.

The move followed weeks of signals from Storm –Trooper Central. First came the study from a liberal think tank, the Center for American Progress, purporting to show that 91% of weekday talk radio is conservative.

Since the early 1990s, talk radio has been driving the left nuts. At the mere mention of O'Reilly or Dr. Laura, their eyes begin to blaze and flecks of saliva fly from the corners of their mouths. What words are most likely to strike terror into the hearts of leftists? "Rush, I used to be a liberal before I started listening to your show."

Bill Clinton actually tried to blame the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing on talk radio for creating "extremists" (defined as those who didn't like Hillary's plan to nationalize health care). Flash forward to the present, when Sen. Trent Lott (Mush, Mississippi) confided: "Talk radio is running the country. We have to deal with that problem."

Senator James Inhofe (R-Okla.) says he overheard Senators Boxer and Clinton talking about the need to "fix" talk radio. (Hillary fixes things the way her alter ego, Tony Soprano, takes care of his little problems.) "They said we've got to do something about this. These are nothing but far right extremists. We've got to have balance. There's got to be a legislative fix for this," Inhofe confided.

Leftists are obsessed with talk radio for a very good reason -- because it's the only segment of the media they don't control. They have CBS, ABC, NBC, CNN, MSNBC, PBS and NPR.

We have FOX News.

They have The New York Times, Washington Post, USA TODAY, Time and Newsweek -- as well as the newspapers that dominate every major media market in America.

We have The New York Post, Washington Times and editorial pages of the Wall Street Journal (except on immigration and any other issues dear to the heart of corporate America).

And they have Hollywood. The number of conservative movies produced each year can be counted on one finger of one hand, against “Syriana,” “An Inconvenient Truth,” “V for Vendetta,” “The Good Shepard,” “Brokeback Mountain,” “The Constant Gardener,” “Fahrenheit 9/11” and “Good Night and Good Luck.” What Leni Riefenstahl was to the National Socialists, Hollywood is to our socialists.

The same bias is evident on the small screen.

A just-released study by the Culture and Media Institute shows a direct correlation between hours of watching TV and liberalism. For instance, heavy viewers (more than four hours an evening) are more than twice as likely as light viewers (one hour a night or less) to agree with the statement, “The government needs to get bigger.”

The survey seems intuitively obvious. The people who decide what news stories to cover and how to report them, the TV talkers and the scriptwriters for prime-time television shows are doctrinaire leftists.

A study by MSNBC (not the Heritage Foundation or the Republican Study Committee) disclosed the political leanings of the media elite reflected in their campaign giving. Of 143 journalists identified in the study who made political contributions from 2004 to the start of the 2008 campaign, 125 contributed to Democratic and liberal causes, versus 16 who gave to Republicans (probably Rudy Giuliani).

Wait, as the old Ronco commercials used to say, that's not all. The left also controls public education and higher education. Pick a liberal arts college at random, and its faculty will likely resemble MoveOn.org's donor list.

With honorable exceptions, the left controls all of society's idea transmission belts, except talk radio. But being the monopolists that they are, any competition terrifies them.

Hence the hit parade of demagogues who want to use the Fairness Doctrine as a club to beat Laura Ingraham to death.

How dare these upstarts incite the unwashed masses to thwart what we considered a done deal – amnesty for 12 million to 20 million alien lawbreakers (AKA: The No Potential Democratic Voter Casting A Bi-lingual Ballot Left Behind Bill), Hillary and company fume.

In response to a question by Chris Wallace on “Fox News Sunday,” Senator Dianne Feinstein (if Playboy merged with The Nation, she'd be the July centerfold) said she was looking at bringing the Fairness Doctrine back from the dead, “Because I think there ought to be an opportunity to present the other side. And, unfortunately, talk radio is overwhelmingly one way.”

And the news media, Hollywood and academia are overwhelming the other way.

Does Di-Fi think The New York Times should be required to run a quota of conservative editorials? Should CBS News be made to demonstrate that liberal politicians are targeted as often as conservatives in investigative reports? (How about referring to Ted Kennedy as an ultra-liberal as often as they used to identify Jesse Helms as an “ultra-conservative”?) Should there be a law mandating that colleges and universities achieve something

resembling political diversity in their hiring (especially for economics, political science and history faculties)?

Silly questions. For Feinstein and her colleagues – including John Forbes Kerry, who’s still fuming that right-wing talkers had the audacity to quote his testimony trashing the troops when he returned from Vietnam – The There-Ought-To-Be-An-Opportunity-To-Present-The-Other-Side Doctrine is to be applied only to talk radio.

Why is talk radio dominated by conservatives?

1. Because it’s the most market-driven medium (you can check a station’s popularity – and, by extension, that of its programming -- in the Arbitron ratings) and station owners, like other businessmen, want to make money.
2. Because it’s the only place normal Americans can go for news and commentary that isn’t strained through the filter of political correctness.
3. Because liberals consistently fail at the medium. Talk radio is entertainment as much as education. Fanatics aren’t filled with humor and bonhomie. (Himmler, Beria – these were not funny guys) Rosie O’Donnell is as much fun as an exploding fat-cell. Al Franken? He’s good enough. He’s smart enough. And – doggone it – people don’t like him. Radio America (which is as American as a bunch of aging Trotskyites singing “The Internationale” while Jeanenne Garafalo dances with the Bolshoi Ballet in the background) filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection last October, to keep creditors at bay.

Aside from their effort to neutralize conservative talk radio, wherever there’s censorship in the land, you can hear the thud of liberal jackboots. Campus speech codes are designed not to enforce civility but to suppress conservative ideas. If it’s ever enacted, the

federal Hate Crimes bill will be used to punish preachers who express the Biblical view on homosexuality.

Having succeeded at creating speech-suppression zones around abortion clinics – to restrict pro-life advocacy -- the left is now using the same techniques to keep counter-demonstrators away from gay pride events. If you want to protest a city-sponsored sodomy-fest in Philly, you have to stand with your signs in Pittsburgh.

Ideas the left doesn't like it labels "hateful" and "hurtful," then applies the jackboot firmly to the necks of dissidents.

The 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals – the most left-leaning in the land – just handed down a disastrous decision – upholding censorship by the City of Oakland, Calif. (the state Fairness Feinstein represents).

In 2002, a group of homosexual employees were given access to the city's e-mail system to promote "National Coming Out Day." When a group of Christian women working for Oakland (who happened to be black) asked for the same opportunity to promote their group, the Good News Employee Association, described as "a forum for people of faith to express their views on contemporary issues of the day, with respect for *the natural family, marriage and family values*," they were rebuffed.

Concepts like the natural family, marriage and family values were "disruptive," "not inclusive" and constituted "harassment based on sexual orientation," the Christian ladies were informed. Their print fliers were removed from municipal bulletin boards, with the warning that any further attempt to exercise free-speech rights would result in disciplinary action "up to and including termination."

Senator Dianne (I think there ought to be an opportunity to present the other side) Feinstein, please call your office.

Better even than the Fairness Doctrine, how about a new Federal Fairness Enforcement Administration, which would send armed agents into homes. When they find that occupants are tuned in to Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Bill O'Reilly, et al, they can force them, at gunpoint, to switch to the local NPR station or turn off the radio and begin reading The New York Times editorial pages.