

Lieberman Defeat: Referendum on the DLC

by Debra Freeman

On Aug. 9, the day after Connecticut's Joe Lieberman became only the fourth incumbent U.S. Senator since 1980 to lose a primary election, the Democratic Senate leadership, in a last-ditch attempt to get Lieberman to bow out gracefully, held a press conference to announce that they were, as promised, endorsing the winner of the primary race—in this case, Lieberman's opponent Ned Lamont. And, also as promised, Lieberman ignored their pleas for unity and announced that he would use a loophole in Connecticut's electoral law to remain in the Senate race as an independent candidate. He did so claiming that he was staying in the race because he "wanted to help end the war in Iraq as quickly as possible." It was a laughable statement, given that Lieberman's support for the Iraq War has been second only to Bush's and Cheney's. And, in an attempt to debunk claims that he was running as a "spoiler," Lieberman insisted, "I am and will always be a proud, progressive, strong-on-defense Democrat."

Despite that declaration, however, Lieberman's denunciations of his fellow Democrats since that day have been so vitriolic that, last week, the Senate Democratic Caucus decided that, if Lieberman were to actually win the general election in November, he would not be welcome back into the Caucus and would, in fact, be stripped of all seniority. Although it was a positive step, it was only taken when Lieberman left them with almost no choice, and was long overdue.

National press and media had put a spotlight on the Lieberman-Lamont race, calling it a referendum on the Iraq war. In the weeks leading up to the primary vote, when Lieberman's poll numbers began to plummet, he turned to fellow Democrats and asked them to come into the state to campaign for him. Most of them, including John Kerry, Hillary Clinton, and Al Gore, refused. They refused not simply because Lieberman is the Administration's favorite Democrat, but because, traditionally, out-of-state intervention in a primary race is rare. Only the ambitious freshman Senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, seemed willing to make appearances on Lieberman's behalf.

Lieberman's Extortion

Ultimately, Lieberman resorted to blatant extortion. Democrats are looking to 2006 as an opportunity to make enough electoral gains to give them a majority in Congress,

and their chances of doing so are especially promising in the U.S. Senate. But, pre-November strategies all counted on the Connecticut Senate seat remaining in Democratic hands. Lieberman went to the Senate Democratic Campaign Committee and made clear to them that were he to lose the primary, he would run as an Independent. Their worry was that with Lieberman and Lamont both in the race against a Republican candidate, especially in a state with a Republican governor who enjoys an approval rating of over 70%, they'd lose the seat.

While campaigning, Lieberman told audiences that since Bush has been in the White House, he has voted with the Democrats 90% of the time. What he failed to mention, was that when he did vote with the Administration, the votes were critical in securing victories for Bush. In addition to his enthusiastic support for the Iraq War, Lieberman, remaining true to his Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) roots, was willing to go along with the Administration's plan to privatize Social Security, supported Bush's tax cut for the wealthy, and has been a rabid supporter of free trade. When the Administration was threatening to usurp the constitutional authority of the U.S. Senate by invoking what became known as "the nuclear option," the Democratic caucus knew they couldn't count on Lieberman's vote.

It would have been easy to shut Lieberman down in the face of his attempted extortion. When Lyndon LaRouche learned of Lieberman's threats, he said they were laughable. All the Democrats had to do was make those threats public and expose Lieberman for what he was. Had they done so, it would have not only sealed Lieberman's fate in the race against Lamont, but would have stripped him of any shred of credibility, were he to pursue an independent candidacy. Instead, the Senate Democratic leadership capitulated. In the closing days of the primary campaign, a parade of key Democrats, including former President Bill Clinton, arrived on the scene to lend a boost to Lieberman. Even Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), who is one of the staunchest opponents of Bush's Iraq War, was arm-twisted into coming in to endorse Lieberman "for the good of the national Party." Ironically, Democratic National Committee (DNC) Chairman Howard Dean seemingly took a "principled" position and refused to succumb to Lieberman's extortion attempt, refraining from endorsing either of the two Democrats prior to the vote.

Although the extortion operation was real, it wasn't the question of one Democratic Senate seat that led to the capitulation. If Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (Nev.), Charles Schumer (N.Y.), Barbara Boxer, and former President Clinton were merely concerned about keeping Lieberman's Senate seat in the Democratic column, they could have easily done so by exposing Lieberman and his extortion attempt. They could have pointed out, either directly, or through surrogates, that long before Lieberman sided with the Bush Administration against the interests of the vast majority of



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Democratic voters made it clear what they think of Joe Lieberman and his pro-Bush policies. Will the Democratic Party learn the lesson?

the American people, and long before he supported the war in Iraq, it was Joe Lieberman who lent credibility to the treasonous assault on the institution of the Presidency, when he took the Senate floor in September 1998 and denounced President Clinton as "immoral and harmful," and called on him to resign. And that, two years later, when he was Al Gore's pick for Vice President, it was Lieberman's insistence that the Democratic Party distance itself from the policies of FDR, that made the Gore-Lieberman ticket the *only* conceivable Democratic ticket that could have lost to Bush and Cheney.

The Treacherous Role of the DLC

The real question—and a far more troubling one—had to do with the role of the DLC, which Lieberman chaired from 1994 to 2000. The reader might ask, "But, wait! Wasn't the issue of the DLC settled following the 2004 election?" It certainly is the case that following the 2004 Democratic Convention, John Kerry did turn away from the DLC policies, in favor of policies that addressed the needs of the traditional constituency of the Democratic Party, although he did so too late in the campaign. In the aftermath of that stinging electoral defeat, it did seem that the question was finally settled.

Following a strategy defined by LaRouche, a disciplined and unified effort by Congressional Democrats refused to compromise when Bush made the privatization of Social Security the cornerstone of his domestic agenda. Democratic leaders from House and Senate marched from the Capitol to the FDR Memorial, asserted that the Democratic Party was still the party of FDR, and that it would not trade away the single most successful program of the New Deal. To the dismay of the DLC, hundreds of town meetings were held across the nation. The campaign not only successfully scraped the

Democratic Party off the floor, it resulted in a bitter defeat for Bush, and led to declarations that Bush had become the earliest “lame duck” President in U.S. history.

But, the DLC’s demise was a temporary one. As this publication has documented, at the same time that international synarchist networks dictated the policies of the Bush Administration, they also managed to infiltrate the ranks of the Democrats, particularly in the person of banker Felix Rohatyn. And, their handle was money.

Approximately one year ago, as Democrats began to gear up for the 2006 campaign, a campaign that carries an excellent potential to block this Administration by taking back a Democratic majority in Congress, leaders of the Democratic Campaign Committees learned that DNC Chairman Dean had squandered millions of dollars that they thought would be available for the 2006 races. Suddenly, the DLC, with their access to large sums of corporate money, didn’t look so bad. And, although it was not quite the case that the Democrats were prepared to embrace the “two Republican parties” policy that led to Bush’s election in the first place, they also were willing to compromise to keep the money flowing into the campaign war chest. Supporting Lieberman was part of that compromise.

But, while the national media may have played the Connecticut primary as a referendum on the war in Iraq, it was also just as much a referendum on the DLC. And, both Bush and the DLC were roundly defeated. So, when the Democratic leadership came out in strong support of Lamont following Lieberman’s defeat, and then made clear that Lieberman would not be welcomed back into the fold, many saw it as a sane turn away from the DLC.

As for the Republican leadership, because Bush is indeed convinced that Lieberman’s candidacy is a referendum on his own Iraq policy, they are devoted to see to it that Lieberman wins. The day that Lieberman announced his independent bid, Karl Rove reportedly contacted his campaign, declaring that “the boss” had instructed him to help in whatever way he could. Prominent neo-cons, from Ann Coulter to Tom DeLay, have endorsed Lieberman. The national Republican Party has pulled all support from the Republican candidate. Connecticut’s Republican Governor Jodi Rell (who enjoys an approval rating of over 70%) campaigned with Lieberman. It is expected that the Republican support will continue. Bush, the President from the dark side, apparently is convinced that a Lieberman win means that all is well with his failing Presidency, and has made clear that the Republican Party is to stop at nothing to secure it.

Ultimately, the support may do more to hurt Joe Lieberman than help him. Polls taken shortly after the primary showed Lieberman anywhere from 14 to 18 percentage points ahead of Democrat Lamont. But, following all the GOP support, a series of polls released the week of Aug. 21 showed that Lieberman’s lead has narrowed to a statistically negligible 2%. Hopefully, the Democrats are paying attention.