

The Inside Story Of Dean's Sabotage

by Debra Hanania-Freeman

When Senate Democrat Tim Johnson was rushed into emergency surgery on Dec. 13 to alleviate intercranial bleeding caused by a congenital defect, Democrats across the nation held their breaths. Prior to that day, many Democrats outside of his home state of South Dakota had never even heard of the centrist Democrat. But, the realization that he might not be unable to serve out the remaining two years of his term, highlighted the fragility of the Democrats' 51-49 lead in the Senate. The press wasted no time in speculating that, should Senator Johnson die, South Dakota's Republican Gov. Mike Rounds would likely name a Republican to succeed him; a move that would not only erase the Democrats' one-vote majority, but would also give Vice President Dick Cheney the decisive vote on critical issues.

Fortunately, Johnson is recovering well and there is no reason at all to believe that he will relinquish his seat. However, the close call reintroduced a discussion of the number of additional seats the Democrats *could* have won, were it

not for what Democratic strategist James Carville famously labelled “the Rumsfeldian incompetence” of Democratic National Committee Chairman Howard Dean.

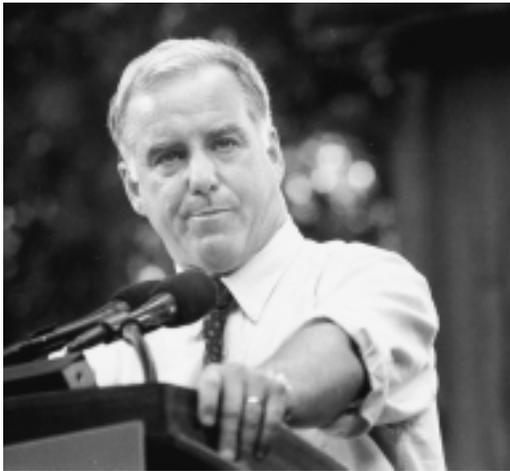
Indeed, as *EIR* has documented, the fight over the Democratic Party’s midterm election strategy erupted no later than last Spring, when Charles Schumer and Rahm Emanuel, the respective heads of the Democratic Senate and House Campaign Committees, demanded an emergency meeting to discuss the fact that Dean’s DNC was starving Democratic campaigns of funds, and instead funneling money into Dean’s so-called “50-state strategy,” a “strategy” that did little more than buy Dean loyalty from state Party officials whose treasuries swelled. Democratic strategists, among them Carville and Stan Greenberg, argued that with Bush’s approval rating plummeting rapidly, Democrats could win far more than the 15 seats that they needed for a majority in the House of Representatives. In fact, in the months leading up to the November election, it became increasingly apparent that a clear and aggressive national strategy could give the Democrats a majority in the Senate and a *veto proof* majority in the House.

Dean’s ‘Grassroots Strategy’ for Defeat

Approximately 16 days before election day, more prominent Democratic strategists, including former DCCC (Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee) head Martin Frost of Texas and Howard Wolfson of New York, urged Dean to expand the Party’s effort in second- and third-tier House races. Democratic candidates in districts that earlier had been considered long shots, surged in the polls, and pleaded with Emanuel’s committee to send critical funds their way for the last weeks of the campaign. But, the campaign committees were already overextended. If additional funds were to be deployed, the money would have to come from DNC coffers.

Howard Dean continued to insist that such a move would take money away from the effort to build up the Party’s “grassroots” organization and that that, ultimately, was of far greater long-term importance than the midterm election. Ironically, Dean’s main allies in setting Democratic sights low did not come from the Party’s left wing, but from the same Democratic Leadership Council crowd that presided over the disastrous 2000 national election that sent Bush to the White House in the first place. Another Democratic consultant with close ties to labor, Steve Rosenthal, argued strenuously against an aggressive strategy.

Rosenthal was prominently featured in a *New York Times* piece cautioning against Democratic “overconfidence,” insisting that the best the Democrats could hope for, even in the House, was a majority of one, and that looking for more would result in a crushing defeat. “On the House side,” he argued, “it makes sense to be focusing on 25 seats to win 14, *not* 50.” He accused Schumer and Emanuel of being “overenthused” and argued that the Party did not have unlimited funds. “We



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis



EIRNS/Stuart Lewis

Democratic strategist James Carville (right) scored DNC chair Howard Dean's failure to fund second- and third-tier Democratic campaigns, calling it "Rumsfeldian incompetence," but it smelled more like outright sabotage.

have to be careful," he said.

In the days following the Democrats' stunning Nov. 7 victory, Dean rushed before the cameras and claimed credit for the win. But, when the dust settled, it was very clear that Dean's strategy had in truth sabotaged what could have been a Democratic landslide. Fourteen Democratic Congressional candidates lost by two percentage points or less. In Florida, another Democratic candidate, Christine Jennings, is now in court to overturn the GOPer Vern Buchanan's 376-vote lead in an election with 18,000 undervotes for Congress. Jennings has also filed a "Notice of Contest" with the Clerk of the House of Representatives.

Was a lack of money a factor in these losses? In the last three weeks of the election, according to the Federal Election Commission, the National Republican Campaign Committee spent \$58,326.78 on robocalls against Christine Jennings, buying Buchanan approximately 1.17 million calls in a district where only 250,000 people voted. Voters in the Florida district reported being inundated with calls. According to the local press, voters were terribly confused. Since the calls began saying, "Hi, I'm calling with information about Christine Jennings," and did not identify the true source of the calls until the very end (by which time most people had already hung up), voters thought the intrusive calls were coming from the Jennings campaign. From the *Sarasota Herald Tribune*: "We're just glad the election is over," said Betty Beatty. "They bugged us with their phone calls something terrible," said Beatty, a Democrat who voted for Republican Buchanan because, "with all her calls, Jennings, Jennings, Jennings, I wouldn't have voted for that woman if she were the only one running."

Florida's 13th District wasn't the only one targeted. The National Republican Congressional Committee was respon-

sible for repetitive, often harassing robocalls in more than two dozen districts across the country in the immediate run-up to the election. In at least seven of those districts, the Democrat failed to unseat a Republican incumbent by only a couple of thousand votes. Election analysts are arguing that the NRCC calls may have been the difference in those races, particularly because the Democratic candidates didn't have the funds to mount an effective counter-offensive. Some of those races were extremely close.

- In New York's 25th District, Dan Maffei lost by fewer than 4,000 votes, out of a total of more than 200,000. According to a local radio station, voters got repeat calls (i.e., if they hung up, their number would be automatically redialed), leading many to think that they were being harassed by the Maffei campaign. Maffei's campaign office was inundated with complaints. Overall, the New York environment was one that was favorable for Democrats. Had Maffei had sufficient funds for one more week of ads against Rep. Jim Walsh, even Republican strategists agree that he could have brought him down.

- In Illinois' 6th District, Tammy Duckworth, a veteran of the Iraq War who recovered from severe injuries and went on to run for Congress, was not only the victim of the NRCC's robocall campaign. The Republican Party spent \$1.1 million in a single day to help Peter Roskam hold her off. Still, she lost by only approximately 4,000 votes.

- In Pennsylvania's 6th District, Lois Murphy lost by 3,000 votes. AP reported that her district was inundated by the calls. The FEC shows that the national GOP poured \$3.9 million into the district to save Jim Gerlach's seat.

And there's also Eric Massa, who narrowly lost in New York's 29th District (fewer than 6,000 votes); Diane Farrell in Connecticut (down slightly more than 6,000); and Phillip

Kellam in Virginia's 2nd District (down fewer than 5,000 votes)—all of whom were victims of the NRCC's robocall effort.

Other Democratic candidates, who weren't necessarily victims of robocalls, were just victims of a lack of funding. Gary Trauner suffered a narrow loss to Rep. Barbara Cubin (R-Wyo.). Larry Kissell lost by less than 1% (fewer than 400 votes) to Rep. Robin Hayes (R-N.C.). Neither Democrat received a single dollar from the national party. The list goes on and on.

On the Senate side, the Tennessee race stands out. Democratic Rep. Harold Ford, who is black, was in a contest with Chattanooga's former Republican Mayor Bob Corker for the Senate seat vacated by Bill Frist (the outgoing Republican Senate Majority Leader). Ford was called "an amazing candidate because of his charisma and powerful ads," and he led Corker in the polls throughout much of the race. Whether Ford could be legitimately called "an amazing candidate" is arguable, but Corker is unarguably a scandal-ridden idiot. But, in the last days of the campaign, Corker was bailed out by huge investments by the national Republican Party. His campaign ran a series of ads that were scandalous and overtly racist. Ford had received significant funds from the DSCC (Democratic Senate Campaign Committee) during the course of his campaign, but when the GOP attack ads hit, DSCC funds *and* Ford's were largely depleted. When the final votes were tallied, Ford had picked up 48% of the vote—five percentage points more than John Kerry had won during the 2004 Presidential campaign.

Not in the 'Cult of the DNC'

A week after the election, at a *Christian Science Monitor* breakfast in Washington, D.C., James Carville unleashed a scorching assault on Howard Dean. Carville explained that the DNC had taken out a \$10 million line of credit for the campaign and used barely half of it. Carville said Dean left \$6 million on the table that Democratic candidates like Ford, and second- and third-tier Democratic candidates could have used to pick up more seats. Dean's argument that funding those candidates would take money away from his effort to build up the Party's grassroots organization was a totally fraudulent one.

Carville's public statements have charged Dean with incompetence. However, it is very hard to believe that even Howard Dean could be *that* incompetent. But, then, why would Dean wittingly sabotage candidates of his own party?

A close look at the Democrats who sought office, and many of those who actually won, reveal a group of individuals who, for the most part, are not acolytes of what Carville has referred to as the "Cult of the DNC." A large portion of them are not politicians in the traditional sense, but instead a product of the American people's deep and growing discontent with the policies of the Bush-Cheney Administration. When they entered their races, they didn't necessarily expect to win;

they just knew they had to fight. The national party gave them nothing, and they owe the national party nothing. In large part, they can be expected to respond to the people who elected them.

A study released by the Republican Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research group provides some critical insights. According to the study's findings, one critical margin in the Democratic victory was Republican swing voters—Luntz, Maslansky calls them the "Republican Rejectors."

The study showed that the Republican Rejectors didn't necessarily like the Democrats. Then why did they vote for them? They were angry. When read the statement, "I'm mad as hell and I'm not going to take it anymore," 61% of Republican Rejectors agreed. They cited a lack of accountability as the number one sin of the Bush-Cheney Administration. Seventy-nine percent said they wanted whoever took control of the Congress to pursue "bold, meaningful change." The change they wanted most: an end to what they saw as preferential spending by the Bush Administration, as opposed to spending on things that were important to them. The 79% said they felt sad and disappointed about what Bush-Cheney had turned the Republican Party into.

But, above all, 74% of Republican Rejectors said they had lost hope and think that their children will inherit a *worse* America than what their parents left to them (compared to 57% of the general population). No hope = no votes.

It is precisely that sentiment, that mass effect, that the LaRouche Youth Movement catalyzed during the campaign. While the Republican Rejectors may have played some role in the Democrats' November victory, the far more significant margin came from the largest turnout of young voters—some 10 million or more—in more than 20 years. In Montana, where Democrat Jon Tester won by one percentage point, his margin among voters under 30 years old (who were 17% of the total electorate), was a full 12 points.

On Jan. 4, when the new Congress is sworn in, it will signal the end of business as usual in Washington. Far too many of them know exactly what it is that got them elected—their opposition to Bush and Cheney, their fight for economic justice and the principle of the general welfare, for decent health care—and they are likely to remain loyal to it. Still more, many of them Republicans, are acutely aware of the dissatisfaction with this Administration that voters expressed on Nov. 7. There is no doubt that under Lyndon LaRouche's leadership, the LYM played a key role in ushering in a New Politics. And there is little doubt that the Bush Administration is in for the fight of its life when Congress reconvenes. But, opposition to Bush and Cheney's war is not going to be enough. Just like those Republican Rejectors, the American people need hope. And that hope is only possible if we succeed in ushering in a New Economics on the heels of the New Politics; a new economics characterized by the policies that LaRouche has advocated for upwards of three decades.