

Let the World Know

We Are Democrats

A Democratic NewsGroup Posting

August 2, 2003

We've got to face the facts.

Until the Party comes to grip with the uncomfortable issue of "moderation" by "New Democrats" vs. "liberalism" by older and, ironically, many newer Democrats, our leaders will continue to be unable to articulate a coherent message and, no matter how foolhardy or corrupt the message from the Right, we'll never be able to resurrect our party from "second class" status.

To me, the problem is not primarily in our selves but in our opponents.

The DLC [Democratic Leadership Council] is probably the most intelligent, well reasoned, poll-savvy group in political history: Our party and our country owe them a deep debt of gratitude for having given us the leadership of President Clinton and numerous others nationwide. I shudder to imagine what state our nation would be in if the first Bush Administration were to have been re-elected, then followed by the current Bush Administration: How deep could we go into debt, how many wars could we fight, how many civil liberties could we surrender before our nation collapsed, from without or within?

Nonetheless, for "the fine art of compromise" to work, "it takes two to tango"; and far from "meeting us halfway," our political opposition has pulled the center farther and farther to the right.

And just consider the results.

Clinton should have "appeased" the conservative tendencies in the nation by balancing the budget, freeing international trade, and "reforming" welfare—all at great political cost from the Left—but how did the Right react? They impeached him!

When Clinton took office, preaching the New Democrat agenda, our party controlled both houses of Congress. Did we succeed in "appeasing" our political enemies and "growing" our influence? No! We now struggle to regain the presidency and have lost control of both houses of Congress, not to mention any influence over the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court.

In California, Gray Davis made many enemies on the Left by adamantly adhering to a "Centrist" position. Did that "appease" the Right? Not hardly! They have taken the historically unprecedented step of attempting to

recall him and may well succeed (God help us all).

We have to realize that we are dealing with a Republican leadership that frames issues both foreign and domestic as apocalyptic battles between "good and evil," much to the horror of the more moderate elements of their own party, who, however, as good Republicans, play "follow the leader" more often than not.

As much as we Democrats work for peace, we must never forget that even FDR, the greatest and most liberal of modern presidents, was forced to lead our nation to fight the fascists overseas, just as we Democrats today need a president who is willing and able to take on the neo-fascist politics and policies we face at home—and make no mistake, from the hypocritical impeachment over private behavior to the extreme abuses of the Patriot Act and the unabashed contempt for international law and treaties, our political enemies are attacking the very heart of our constitutional liberties at home and undermining our longstanding as well as newly formed alliances worldwide.

Two stories: One fictional, the other all too true, both very apropos.

Back in the '80s, on *Hill Street Blues*, there was an episode in which "Norman Buntz" (played to the hilt by Dennis Franz, who likewise plays "Sipowicz" now on *NYPD Blue*) is held hostage with another guy by some lunatic. The other guy's trying to kiss up to the madman, while Buntz is telling the crook to "kiss my ass." Guess who eats lead and who gets out alive.

Back in the '90s, the day before New Years, on Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena, I was in the passenger seat of a car as we pulled up to a stoplight. As I turned to my right, I suddenly noticed that there was this punk on the sidewalk, about eight feet away, pointing a gun at my head (If it was a mock-up, it was a goddamn convincing one). He had a sh*t-eating grin on his face and thought he was pretty darn cute. Nowhere to go. Nothing to say (through the glass of the window, over the noise on the street). So what did I do? Did I whine and beg and plead for mercy? Like this guy was Mother Theresa or something. Did I cuss him out and give him the finger? Am I nuts or something? (Real life ain't TV) With no time to think, just letting my instincts take over, I looked him straight in the eye and gave him a look that let him know that this was in no way, shape, or form "cute"; I let him know the severe gravity of the situation. After a brief moment, he "flinched," mouthing the word "Pow" and bucking the pistol in his hand. I turned away in something approaching but not quite contempt. The light changed and we drove on, slowly through the holiday traffic.

It's amazing that none of the crowd already camped out and milling about on the street for the Rose Parade the next day even seemed to notice what had just transpired, but that's grist for another essay on human nature.

The point of my two stories is obvious. When faced with a vicious, uncompromising enemy, you cannot afford to flinch, let alone try to appease him. You've got to stand your ground. It's not "belligerent" to stand up to a bully—it's just being a responsible adult.

And even if you fail, then like Emiliano Zapata said, "It is better to die on your feet than to live on your knees."

If at some point our political enemies want to "make nice" and "play fair," all well and good. But this past decade has shown us that when we extend the hand of "compromise," they cut it off.

Let the world know we are Democrats—whatever we want to define that as in this generation—and let the chips fall where they may.

Nobody wants a president they don't respect.