

Will the Democrats Disintegrate, Again?

by Nancy Spannaus

Have Howard Dean and his British banker backers determined to wipe the Democratic Party off the map? That is the only conclusion you can come to, if you face the virtually inescapable consequences of Dean's attempt to abort the candidacy of Hillary Clinton.

There have been assorted warnings of how the electorate might react to the ramming through of the Obama candidacy, without counting all the primary votes which have been cast. Many polls indicate that a large percentage of Clinton voters would hold their noses, and vote for John McCain. Democrats who believe their votes have been disregarded going into the convention (for example, in Florida and Michigan), will be enraged enough to stay home, or vote the other way. Even without such defections, there are clear signals that forcing Clinton out, would lead to what might otherwise be considered impossible—a Republican victory.

True, Al Gore was the only Democrat who could have lost to George W. Bush in 2000, but after eight years of Bush-Cheney, to lose to the Republicans again would be an extraordinary feat.

But history shows it could be done—and by the same forces that did it before. It was the British Fabian influence in the late 1960s, mobilizing in both the “left” and the “right,” which succeeded in polarizing the Democratic Party—to the point of the riots at the 1968 convention. But even before the riots, the so-called New Democrats had moved to take over the party of Franklin Roosevelt, through an assault on the Party's commitment to constituencies who represented industry and agriculture. Labor was labelled “reactionary” because it wanted to protect jobs in the deepening economic crisis, against the demand for affirmative action. Whereas FDR would have mobilized for an overall economic recovery, to provide jobs for all rebuilding the economy, the New Dems went on the offensive against labor.

The result was the election of Richard Nixon, a disaster for the nation and the world.

In the early 1970s, the New Democrat ideology was combined with that of radical environmentalism, as well as countercultural politics. The result, consolidated through party reforms carried out by the McGovern campaign, was to destroy the FDR coalition.

It got worse. The election of Jimmy Carter in 1976 brought the Democratic Party to power, only to have it use the instruments of government to carry out judicial witchhunts against labor (Abscam-Brilab), deregulation, and assaults on high-technology industry (nuclear power). The Democratic Party base revolted against a revolting party apparatus.

The consequences became clear in 1980, when a substantial number of Democrats held their noses and voted for Ronald Reagan. By Reagan's second election in 1984, the defections were even more dramatic, with Reagan taking 59% of the vote and 49 of the 50 states. The “Reagan Democrats” were born, and they stayed with the Republican Party for decades—only to begin returning “home” as the travesties of the Bush II Administration multiplied.

The standard neocon line is that the Democratic Party splintered because it was concentrated on liberal “single issues.” The reality is that it splintered because it abandoned the core commitment of the FDR coalition, the commitment to fight on the basic economic issues of the lower 80% of income brackets, on the absolute necessity of the Federal government acting for the general welfare.

Senator Clinton's focus on mobilizing those forgotten men and women in the midst of the current economic blow-out, shows how the party can, not only be put back together, but it can put the nation back together, with a new bipartisan coalition, not unlike the one FDR wrought in the emergency of the 1930s.

Those who want to kill her candidacy, will not only kill the party—but the nation as well.