

## How Liberal Elites Have Destroyed the Democratic Party

Can a Democrat become the next President of the United States? Mark Stricherz, author of the new book, [\*Why the Democrats Are Blue\*](#), insists it is not very likely. Stricherz, a former reporter and researcher for the New Republic, argues that the Democratic Party has been hijacked by feminists and a radical left-wing agenda that is not tenable in a general election, which is why the Democratic Party has done poorly over the last 40 years, winning only three of the last 10 presidential elections. Moreover, during this time, not one of its winning presidential candidates has been able to garner more than half the popular vote. Jimmy Carter couldn't do it. Bill Clinton couldn't do it.

### **Overtaken by 'New Politics'**

So why have Americans become disenchanted with the People's Party? Stricherz, a fervent Catholic Democrat, believes that the Democratic Party has been overtaken by the "New Politics" that champions women's liberation and an activist agenda that supports abortion and gay marriage and is anti-war. This new activist platform is an affront to many traditional Catholics and blue-collar workers who have historically aligned themselves with the Democratic Party. Now, the party's base is limited to "blue states" on the coasts and a few Midwestern states such as Illinois and Michigan, with the rest of the electoral map voting Republican red.

By recounting personal stories of postwar Catholic leaders who helped secure many victories for the Democrats, Stricherz explains why many of these former staunch Democrats decided to leave the Democratic Party and become either independents or Republicans. According to Stricherz, a group of secular elites seized control of the party and alienated its base of Catholics, urban ethnic groups and blue-collar workers. These elites usurped the McGovern Commission formed at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago and revolutionized the party's platform. The main players in this coup d'état were pivotal staffers on the commission: Ken Bode, Fred Dutton, Eli Segal and Anne Wexler.

The McGovern Commission, originally created to "democratize the selection process of the party's presidential nominee," was altered into an autocratic vehicle to promote an anti-war candidate sympathetic to the feminist cause. Previously, the nomination process was controlled by a party-boss system that gave the state and local leaders the power to choose delegates. In this system, many young voters and women were excluded from participating in the process and in the state conventions. But with the McGovern Commission, delegate quotas for women and young people became obligatory. This quota system defied the very purpose of the commission by giving these minorities more power.

The thinking behind the strategic move to introduce more women and young people in the nomination process was that these minorities were more likely to favor an anti-war candidate than were the party's traditional backers. At the time, the Democratic Party was split over U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War. The commission did not get its way in 1968. But it would triumph in 1972. The elites running the commission were determined not to have a repeat of 1968 when Vice President Hubert Humphrey won the party's nomination over the anti-war Sen.

Eugene McCarthy (D.-Minn.). Humphrey would later lose the presidency to Richard Nixon. But what these secular elites failed to realize was that Nixon's election was attributed to his appeal of what he called the "silent majority" of socially conservative Americans who disliked the hippie counterculture and the anti-war demonstrations that were prevalent at the time. Instead of consolidating the Democratic base and building on it, the elites systematically expunged social conservative Democrats from the party and extricated the religious and social values that had once united them.

### **Changing Face of the Party**

The introduction of female quotas would have a serious impact on the party. The percentage of female delegates increased dramatically from 13% in 1968 to 43% in 1972. And by 1980, feminists had a major victory when they passed a measure that would require half of all delegates to be female. Feminists were determined to control the party platform and to advance their agenda of "abortion on demand." So tight was their stranglehold on the party that pro-life Pennsylvania Democratic Gov. Bob Casey was denied a speaking slot at the 1992 Democratic National Convention.

The face of the Democratic Party has altered considerably from the 60s and 70s when it had been primarily dominated by Catholics, union members and blue-collar workers, many of whom believed the party was a champion of the poor and powerless. Now, secular elites, feminists, peace lovers and homosexual rights activists dominate the party. What Democrats fail to realize time and time again is that they are out of touch with American values. In 2004, President Bush beat Massachusetts Democratic Sen. John Kerry in the Catholic vote 52% to 47%. Bush was the overwhelming favorite among the approximately one-fifth of voters who identified moral issues as the primary determining factor in choosing a candidate. Were it not for Bush's support of the pro-life position, his defense of the traditional family and his outspoken faith, Kerry would have been elected President. Democrats have not learned the lessons of the past, nor do they concede that allowing pro-life Democrats into their party will make them more electable.

In the current election, Republican candidate Mike Huckabee is surging because voters have taken note of the former Arkansas governor's pro-life, pro-family record and his unabashed religious convictions.

Currently, Senators Hillary Clinton (N.Y.) and Barack Obama (Ill.)—the two leading Democratic presidential nominees— both support abortion and gay marriage. It looks like the Democrats are about to place their hopes yet again on a candidate who embraces a left-wing agenda. Will history repeat itself? For conservatives' sake, let's hope so.

- *Loredana Vuoto is the Communications Director of the Edmund Burke Institute for American Renewal and president of Eloquence. This article appeared in Human Events, January 15, 2008.*