

THE VOORHIS VOICE

A Liberal Voice of the Inland Empire

January 2010

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www.claremontdems.org

Editor Laura Ditte Lo

MEETINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

General Meeting January 25 , Pilgrim Place, Porter Hall 7:00. The speaker at the monthly members' meeting of the Democratic Club of Claremont will be Richard Worthington, Professor of Politics at Pomona College.

Professor Worthington is an expert in environmental action, globalization and science policy. He is interested in how we attain an equitable, democratic and ecologically sustainable society by the action of common citizens rather than by corporations and the military.

He attended the recent Copenhagen Climate Change Conference and will be speaking on what can be learned from that and what we as citizens can do.

Luncheon February 12, LYL Garden Restaurant, 12:00-2:00

General Membership Meeting February 22, Pilgrim Place, Porter Hall 7:00 Sri Lankan Presentation.

A MESSAGE FROM ZEPHYR TATE-MANN, J.D.

PRESIDENT OF THE DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF CLAREMONT

To all of our members, I wish you a happy 2010 . As we approach the end of the year, I would like to report on our activities for 2009.

Our Club has participated in the following activities:

Claremont's July 4th parade and booth activities

Claremont's Village Venture

The Health Care Forum

Claremont's Earth Day

Los Angeles County Democratic booth at the Los Angeles County Fair

Sunday Tabling for Voter Registration and Information

A Mixer to recruit new members

Supported our local campaigns for City Council and School Board

Monthly luncheons and speakers

Monthly general membership meetings and speakers, roundtable discussions and videos

Conducted a food drive for the hungry

Collected blankets for the homeless

Elected delegates to the State Party Convention and to the Executive Board

Issues Committee wrote resolutions, policies for the Budget, and Health Care Reform

Holiday Party

Expanded our website with information

Increased our membership

Some of these activities are new ones for The Club. I continue to look for ways to increase our membership and activism.

2010 should be an interesting year because we will be electing a new Governor. Hopefully, we will also help to get signatures in support of the Lackoff initiative to qualify it for the ballot, which would change the 2/3's requirement to a simply majority for budget purposes.

I encourage some members of our Club to apply for the Re-districting Committee. Our next general membership meeting will be January 25th.

I thank you for your support for 2009 and look forward to working for and with you in 2010.

Resolutions for 2010

Carolee Monroe

To the members of our Democratic Club of Claremont: I ask you to consider the following possible resolutions for 2010:

1. Renew your membership; dues are due January 15 of each calendar year.
2. Join at least one ad hoc committee. Vacancies abound! Your skills and interests can be used for: hospitality; internet; publicity; the Voorhis Voice newsletter (writing or production); photography; special events; fundraising; membership; precinct organization; Farmers' Market/tabling; young Democrats; and political liaison.
3. Volunteer for the campaigns of two of our members who are candidates in upcoming elections. Russ Warner will run again for United States Representative from the 26th Congressional District. Darcel Woods will be a candidate for the 9th Assembly District.
4. Contribute to the fund for a permanent Democratic Headquarters in this area. Bob Gerecke and Rudy Mann are the "go-to" people.
5. Learn more about the effort to undo the 2/3s rule; get informed about the Lakoff petition and work to get it passed.
6. Schedule yourself to attend one more luncheon and an additional general membership meeting this year.
7. Contact me about another member to whom I can send a "Get Well" or other thoughtful message, as I chair the sunshine committee.

Our club can be very politically active during the coming year, especially if YOU get involved!

DOES OBAMA COMPROMISE TOO MUCH?

Bob Gerecke

The problem lies primarily in the Congress, not in the President. A charismatic personality such as FDR, JFK or Obama can get away with operating as larger-than-life former California State Assembly Speaker Jesse Unruh said and did: "If you can't take their (the vested interests' – ed.) money, drink their booze, screw their women (i.e., prostitutes -- ed.), and then vote against them, you don't belong in politics." But non-charismatic members of Congress don't have that luxury, because a few deep-pocketed contributors can run them out of office in the

next primary or general election. Obama faces a Congress which has famously been called "the best Congress money can buy". Even in those areas of policy which we think are safely within Presidential prerogative, he can be blocked by a recalcitrant Congress or find his domestic agenda blitzed in retaliation. Having been a Senator, he knows that all too well. As a result, he compromises with what he thinks Congress can stomach.

The way to change the result is to change Congress, and that means creating more safe Democratic seats – in both the Senate and the House of Representatives -- from which elected Democrats can safely vote our Party's ideals instead of compromise them. This requires registering Democrats and getting them to vote. Historically, the turnout of mail-in voters is much higher than that of polling-place voters (averaging around 70% vs. 50% or less), so an obvious objective is to persuade Democratic voters to vote by mail. Ultimately we also need public financing of campaigns; that goal is more difficult to achieve but should be pursued simultaneously.

Remember the old saying: "Don't let the perfect be the enemy of the good." If our President demands the perfect, it will result in gridlock and a failed Presidency, unless we do what's necessary to change the makeup of the Congress with which he must work.

CHALLENGES REMAIN

Gar Byrum

We, as a nation, have seen a remarkable time of change and transition from the Bush Presidency to what I believe will be looked back upon as the historic Presidency of Barack Obama. The problems that our new president faced upon his election were daunting, a collapsing economy, years of national neglect, a world facing the challenges of climate change, and the long history of failed attempts at health care reform.

We will close the year with many successes, but challenges remain. Congress and our president has passed many new laws and reforms and are on the precipice of passing health care reform, new and badly needed Wall Street reforms, and the beginnings of climate change rules, regulations and initiatives to make our planet a healthier place.

All is not done and uncertainties abound. Insecurities remain regarding our commitments abroad with an unpopular war in Afghanistan and the remaining but largely forgotten conflict in Iraq.

President Obama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, no small feat, for the promise of peace that he offers and for the profound change of using diplomacy as a first choice and his rebuke of many of the wrongheaded and just plain immoral practices of the prior administration.

Contrary to popular belief President Obama does not walk on water and President Obama is a citizen of the good ole USA. And to paraphrase President Lincoln, you can please some of the people some of the time or in this case, for many of our country he can do nothing right. If peace broke out in the world, the Republican Party would find a way to complain about peace.

Our nation faces a curious and confusing divide between those who claim we are losing our individual freedoms while others applaud our diversity and seek to have a greater sense of community. Fear of change and the chorus raging against the inevitable march of progress ring hollow against the reality of a country with increasing poverty and desperation due to unemployment and wages that are too low to sustain the ability to pay for basic necessities. This is the harsh reality that President Obama faces as we enter a new year.

This was our new president's first year in office. Monday morning quarterbacking is easy. In evaluating his Presidency, thus far, we should look to the political realities of what was truly possible to do. In my view he deserves a standing ovation for what he has accomplished and for his courage to forthrightly face the challenges of the present and of the future that we as a nation must deal with for a better tomorrow.

What are "Democratic Values?"

Ivan Light

I attended Eric Bauman's holiday party for the Los Angeles County Democratic Party Central Committee. At this event, Eric Bauman, Chair of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party, declared that Democrats are united by "Democratic values." It's a phrase Bauman and other prominent Democrats often use. The phrase pleases party activists, who seem to know what the Democratic values are, and who agree they are important. But this vague phrase is not one we could productively offer to a random collection of voters. They wouldn't know what is meant by "Democratic values."

I think we can use the phrase "Democratic values" in our public pronouncements, but, having used it, we should explicate what are Democratic values rather than assuming that everyone understands what they are. It's also true; I feel that many voters feel the Democratic Party lacks soul because its implicit values are not explicitly developed in public pronouncements. This response may be especially common among self-consciously "values" and religious voters who tend to be GOP adherents. Religious and values voters need to hear what are the implicit values that animate Democratic and Republican policy recommendations, and, having heard and understood, many will vote Democratic.

We Democrats do have values that we can share with such people, and, sharing them, we will help the values voters clarify the resonance between their own values and the way they should vote. Below I offer a sample, not intended to be definitive, of a discourse that explains what the implicit values of the Democratic Party are, and then contrasts them with the implicit values of the Republican Party.

The Value of Peace

Peace is a Democratic value. In the full or strong sense, peace is not the absence of war, non-war. Rather, peace is a relationship in which countries do not expect hostility from other countries. In this sense, we have peace with Canada, but not with Iran right now. We are not at war with either country, but we do not have peace with Iran in the strong sense and we do have it with Canada. Moving toward peace in the strong sense should be the ultimate goal of any administration even in the darkest hour of international conflict. Pursuing this goal requires a different strategy than does pursuing an arms race. An arms race may prevent hostilities in the short run, but it does not bring peace, and even risks war in the long run. World War I was the product of a thirty-year arms race among great powers uninterested in peace. Governments that do not consciously seek peace (not just non-war) cannot be trusted to lay the groundwork that may move us toward peace or maintain it once we have attained it.

The Republicans think of peace as the absence of war, and suppose that peace requires massive military supremacy, obtained by endless weapons spending. In their view, only an eternal arms race prevents war. In their view, non-war is the ultimate goal of public policy, not peace. Of course, there is no escaping the necessity for successful military defense of the United States at all times. Non-war is sometimes the best a government can do at the moment. But the Republicans offer a very limited vision that does not include building real peace whenever, however, and wherever possible. In contrast, Democrats are prepared, when necessary to defend our country against aggression, but, having done so, Democrats try to build peace with former antagonists. That's what the Marshall Plan was all about. Because we are at real peace with Germany and Japan today, not just in a state of non-war, we no longer have to maintain an arms race to intimidate them.

The Value of Environmental Stewardship

Environmental stewardship is another Democratic value. We Democrats think that we owe our posterity a habitable planet that has not been plundered of natural resources or turned into a toxic wasteland in the short-run interest of profits and jobs. Unfortunately, politicians respect voters, and those yet unborn, our posterity, do not vote now. Therefore, it's up to our generation to look out for posterity's interest now, as the framers of the Constitution looked out for ours in 1787.

Looking out for the interest of posterity means that some short-term profit opportunities must be rejected on environmental grounds. Republicans do not consider the cost to posterity of profit opportunities that required the production

of toxic waste and environmental degradation . This observation does not gainsay the ability of green policies to produce their own jobs, which they certainly can, but, let's be frank, it does address our open *unwillingness* to create jobs now that are environmentally unsustainable or, even worse, damage the environment. But for the values discrepancy, Republicans would indeed have the better argument.

The Value of Brotherhood

Brotherhood (and sisterhood) is another Democratic value. Democrats care about fellow citizens who are deprived of the essentials of life, such as food, health care, or shelter, because they lack the income to purchase them on the free market. True this apparently humanitarian concern is partially a matter of enlightened self-interest because, as Aristotle pointed out, extremes of poverty and wealth undermine democracies and therewith the welfare of all, even the wealthy. However, it's also the case that Democrats extend a strictly humane and humanitarian concern to the less fortunate members of society, and back that concern with a willingness, if necessary, to pay higher taxes.

In all candor, this Democratic program does not offer the cheapest solution to poverty. The cheapest solution to poverty is to permit the poor to die of malnutrition, disease, and exposure if they cannot obtain private charity. Such is, in fact, the underlying Republican program, and Democrats must acknowledge that the Republicans, who squander tax-payer money on useless wars, save back some tax-payer money by indifference to the death and suffering of fellow citizens. That conceded, few voters are callous enough to endorse the inhumane ethical implications of GOP welfare policies once these are pointed out to them. For this reason, a thorough airing of the value implications of Democratic and Republican policy on poverty, health care, and homelessness must work to the advantage of the Democrats among voters who care about values.

Conclusion

My discussion has intended only to expose some underlying value issues that lurk beneath the surface of debates over public policy. It is very far from definitive in any respect. But progress will have been accomplished if readers agree that vague talk about "Democratic values" is not enough. Democrats should expand their value references into concrete policy areas, contrasting the value implications of typical GOP and typical Democratic policy recommendations. Values voters can be brought into the Democratic camp if only we take the trouble to talk to them in the language they understand, the language of values.

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