



# *Time to reassert some liberal values*

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The conservative faction in American politics is in an ascendancy. It has used its political strength to successfully attack the liberal values that underpin our system of public schools and the nonpartisan nature of our courts.

This is hard to believe when you look at the political and economic debacle of the Bush administration and the lack of a serious, conservative presidential candidate. Yet liberal values are no longer a part of our intellectual and political discourse and they are not because corporate America planned it that way.

The Republican Party is not about to collapse, despite the daydreams of some Democrats. In the state and local governments and in the judiciary, conservative Republicans remain dominant. Thus, Republicans control both legislatures in 29 states compared to only 15 for the Democrats. This is almost an exact reversal from four years ago.

More importantly, the 29 Republican governors are pushing conservative agendas, especially in regard to education, that would have been thought outrageously extremist prior to their actions.

The Supreme Court of the United States, and many of the district courts, are solidly conservative, judicial activists who are pushing a corporate political agenda best exemplified by the Citizens United case.

The Democrats are befuddled by this or just ignore it. Yet, what is happening is clearly the result of deliberate planning and coordinated action. The plan is not some secret conspiracy. It is all down in black and white for anyone to see.

The plan had its beginning on Aug. 23, 1971, when Lewis Powell, then a corporate lawyer and later an associate justice of the Supreme Court, wrote a memo to the Chamber of Commerce claiming that the American free enterprise system was in danger from an attack by leftists and liberals. They were accused of trying to destroy the free enterprise system with consumerism and environmentalism. Powell's proposed response

was for the Chamber of Commerce to lead a corporate takeover of our educational and court systems.

That plan was implemented and has achieved most of its goals. The first targets were the graduate schools and the think-tanks at the great research universities. This is the place where people were free to come up with new ideas, create new technologies, new institutions and honestly question everything about the existing system.

The mission of academic graduate departments and independent think-tanks like the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Brookings Institution "is to conduct high-quality, independent research and, based on that research, to provide innovative, practical recommendations." The independence that think-tanks have traditionally demanded is a liberal value. This is the reason that these neutral organizations are sometimes accused of being "left-leaning."

The corporate community set up a parallel system of "advocacy tanks" to replace graduate schools. The new objective was not to test new knowledge but to look for and push findings that support the corporate agenda.

The Heritage Foundation's mission is to "formulate and promote conservative public policies." Similarly, the American Enterprise Institute exists to validate the values of small government, free markets, individual freedom and a strong national defense. They are committed to the conservative political agenda that now dominates intellectual discourse. The Cato Institute, being more libertarian, got honest and is now being sued for not being conservative enough.

The Powell plan has now moved on to vouchers, charter schools and the general privatization of the public school system. It is seen most clearly in the attack on public school teachers and school budgets by the Republican governors in Wisconsin, Indiana and Pennsylvania. They have all cut taxes on corporations and business but then complain they cannot afford existing budgets for public education.

Powell's plan insists on the political nature of our courts. He says: "Under our constitutional system, especially with an activist-minded Supreme Court, the judiciary may be the most important instrument for social, economic and political change."

Powell was central to the empowerment of corporations in our political system. He wrote the majority opinion in *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti* that created a First Amendment right for corporations. The reasoning in that opinion was the basis for the *Citizens United* decision that expanded corporate money into personhood and consequently First Amendment rights to free speech.

The corporate takeover of the courts can also be seen in the fact that every one of the appointments to the present Supreme Court was more conservative than his or her predecessor.

The attack on education, first the universities and now grade schools, has left the people vulnerable to corporate propaganda and its control of the media. So we have President Barack Obama as a Muslim, global warming as a hoax and evolution as a fraud. The common man will now hear and accept as truth whatever the corporations determine is

the most profitable for them. That means more privatization of public service and the commons.

It is time to make liberal values like empathy, responsibility and community part of our educational and judicial discourse again.

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