

NATIONAL REVIEW

New DNC Chairman Tom Perez Is No 'Moderate' At All

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One of the amazing things about the now-completed Democratic National Committee chairman's race was how former Labor Secretary Tom Perez became perceived as the "moderate" or "centrist" choice. This occurred in part because he was aligned with Hillary Clinton during the 2016 Democratic primary, and partially because his biggest rival was Rep. Keith Ellison, former member of the Nation of Islam, the congressman who meets with radical terror-sponsoring Saudi clerics, the one with the anti-gay imam, the one who used to "go on all the time" about 'Jewish slave traders.'"

"Less radical than Keith Ellison" is an awfully low bar to clear. Relax, fans of the Nation of Islam, Perez says he wants to make Ellison "the face of the Democratic Party," and I am sure many Republicans are ready and willing to help him out in that task.

But consider the possibility that Perez is no less radical than Ellison, and merely focuses his energies in a different area. Last year, when there was some buzz about Perez being Hillary Clinton's running mate, I took a long look at the Labor Secretary's relatively unexamined career:

Perez's liberal credentials are as impeccable as they come. Mother Jones called him "one of the administration's most stalwart progressives." Conservative policy experts who have followed his work in the Justice and Labor Departments consider him perhaps the Obama administration's most radical and relentless ideologue.

Iain Murray, the Competitive Enterprise Institute's vice president of strategy, calls Perez "possibly the most dangerous person in the administration right now."

"His rewriting of U.S. labor law is probably the most fundamental attack on the free-enterprise system going on at present," Murray says. "If he has his way, we won't just revert to the 1930s. We'll do things that even Franklin Roosevelt couldn't do, like eliminate vast numbers of independent-contractor jobs and unionize those that remain."

Murray sees Perez's ideological vision as driven by an arrogant insistence that most workers are oblivious to their own exploitation by employers, and need the state to intervene to help them understand proper "work-life balance" or to make basic choices about work. His work in the Justice Department was just as extreme.

"He essentially operationalized Eric Holder's radicalization of the Department of Justice," says Ilya Shapiro, a senior fellow in Constitutional Studies at the Cato Institute. "No civil-rights theory too crazy to pursue, no litigants too awkward to pay off."

"Perez has shown a glaring inability to tell the truth and dispassionately apply the basic constitutional tenet of 'equal justice under law,'" declared Judicial Watch President Tom Fitton. Long before Obama stepped into the Oval Office, Perez stood out as a Democratic lawmaker willing to ignore or contravene laws that impeded his agenda. As a member and then chairman of the Montgomery County Council, Perez promoted driver's licenses and in-state tuition eligibility for Maryland illegal immigrants.

In 2006, Perez ran for state attorney general and pushed for one of his favorite ideas at the county level, a program to have state residents import low-cost prescription drugs from Canada. But the federal Food and Drug Administration said the program would be illegal, and county attorneys concurred in a formal review, adding, "one need not be a lawyer nor clairvoyant to see the potential for civil liability." Perez responded that, "Sometimes you have to push the envelope in pursuit of the right thing."

Throughout his career, Perez has touted "disparate-impact theory" in discrimination law, which contends that discrimination exists in just about any circumstance where statistical data point to a racial disparity, regardless of whether discriminatory intent can be proven. He was willing to go to unprecedented lengths to protect this touchstone of his legal thinking.

Back in 2014, Perez was asked about inequality in America and in particular, whether the Department of Labor was doing enough to ensure interns weren't being exploited as free labor by unscrupulous employers.

Perez responded:

I was in the U.K. and Germany and went to Volkswagen and learned about their apprenticeship model—young people become paid apprentices in trades. It's not a coincidence that youth unemployment is far lower in Germany than the United States because there are paid opportunities for young people to get experience. So, yes we need to and do investigate [internship violations], but I think the broader solution will help more people faster to transform the culture of America around this earn-while-you-learn idea.

If he believes in the "earn while you learn" idea, does this mean the interns at the Democratic National Committee will be paid? Right now they aren't, even if they're working 40 hours a week in the summer.