Prof. Norman Birnbaum, Washington, Freund der NachDenkSeiten-Herausgeber, schickte mir den folgenden Kommentar von Doug Ireland. Auch wenn leider nur auf Englisch – hier zur Information unserer Leser.

The following commentary was written for Z-Net:

John Kerry has definitively lost the popular vote by some three and a half million votes. That makes an all-out lawyers' war in Ohio devoid of moral force (and I doubt that in the end there'll be one).

Kerry ran a tactical campaign, devoid of vision or explicable alternatives, utterly lacking in message discipline, and riddled with misjudgments–it was one of the most incompetently run presidential campaigns by a Democrat in my lifetime.

Kerry's biggest blunder was his failure to focus like a laser on the economy in the final weeks of the campaign, despite polls showing it was the number one issue on voters' minds. The lethal character of Kerry's scatter-shot, flailing, themeless campaign close can be clearly seen in the Ohio exit polls. In the Buckeye State, 62% of the voters said the economy was "not good"–BUT asked who they'd trust with the economy, they were evenly split between Bush and Kerry, 48-48%.

By not focusing on the economy, even in a state that had lost 250,000 jobs on Bush's watch Kerry couldn't make the case that he'd do better. Whatever economic message (feeble though it may have been) which his campaign had was blown out of the water by Kerry's final-week harangues on the Iraqi explosives issue (about which there was too much reportorial dispute in the media to provide him a clean shot at Bush).

The Rove-Bush Republicans ran a brilliant, disciplined, and utterly base campaign that used three principal issues to defeat the Democrats: Iraq, Israel, and gays.

History will record that John Kerry lost the election on the day he voted the Constitution-shredding blank check for Bush's war on Iraq. He was hobbled throughout the campaign by this vote, which shackled him to a me-too posture that included endlessly repeated pledges to "stay the course" in Iraq and "win" the occupation. Kerry could not, therefore, develop and present a full-blown critique of Bush on Iraq, nor offer a genuine alternative to him on it. The non-existent Kerry "plan" (based on the hubris that he could con foreign allies into sending their troops to bleed and die for the U.S. crimes at Abu Ghraib) wasn't bought by the voters. Bush won by making the link between Iraq and the war on terrorism–the Big Lie which Kerry could not effectively counter, because he'd bought into it at the beginning. And

it was on that endlessly hammered lie that Bush won the country on the Iraq issue–the exit polls Tuesday night showed that voters thought the Iraq war was part of the war on terror by 52-44%.

There was a missed moment (one of many) in the campaign, right after the devastating Senate report on the U.S. intelligence failure leading up to the war, when Kerry could have done what his Senate colleague (and Intelligence Committee ranking Democrat) Jay Rockefeller did then–say, "If I'd known then what I know now, I'd never had voted for the war." But the cautious and spineless Kerry didn't have the intestinal fortitude or the inner conviction necessary to break with his vote for war. It would probably have worked–Americans like someone who can admit a mistake. But Kerry listened to his overpriced, condohead campaign consultants, and instead hid behind his medals.

The Rove-Bush decision to French-kiss Ariel Sharon was entirely an electoral one, directly aimed at Florida. It worked. Bush thus was able to peel off enough of the Jewish vote to reduce the Democratic majorities in Dade County, Palm Beach and other enclaves necessary to overcome Bush, with his lock on the Hispanics and evangelicals. The president won Florida, and quite comfortably.

Finally, there was the decision to surf on the anti-gay backlash that first surfaced in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the so-called sodomy laws, and intensify it as soon as the Massachusetts Supreme Court decided (as it was clear it would) that denying marriage equality to gay people was a violation of fundamental civil rights. The tools to scapegoat gays were the Federal Marriage Amendment, and the 11 anti-gay state referenda.

The exit polls showed 21 percent of voters said that "moral values" –more than either Iraq or the economy– was what determined their vote. Nowhere did this strategy work better than in Ohio, where the southern tier is the cultural equivalent of a Deep South state, drowning in religiously-inculcated homo-hate; and where traditionally Democratic working class Catholic voters –whom Kerry failed to bind to him with an economic program that could arouse their passions–were peeled off in sufficient numbers to reduce Kerry's margins in the larger cities. And the sweeping anti-gay referendum in Ohio –which outlaws civil unions or any more minor legal recognition of same-sex couples, as well as gay marriage– passed by 2-1. As it did in all the other ten states with referenda, with the smallest margin of victory for the anti-gay measure in Michigan (where it won by a resounding 18 points.)

Undoubtedly, the Corporate Democrats and their liberal power-junkie helpmates will decide that they lost the election because they didn't squirm far enough to the right. Where is the institutional leadership–or the leader–who could fight for a reorientation of the party toward

a populist, progressive, passionate commitment to social and economic justice as a REAL alternative to reactionary Republicanism? Oh, Hillary Clinton, you say? Don't make me laugh. But she'll undoubtedly be the Democrats' nominee in 2008–which is why we can expect, not four more years of Republican rule, but 12.

Posted by Doug Ireland at 04:36 AM