

It's the Jobs, Stupid

To the Beltway's surprise, primary voters grasp the importance of fair trade.

By Martin Sieff

A STRANGE THING happened on the way to the Democratic National Convention in Boston. The Democrats discovered protectionism, though of course, none of them dares call it that.

The way was pioneered by a candidate with impeccable protectionist credentials, Rep. Dick Gephardt of Missouri. Yet he got nowhere. He was pulverized in the Iowa caucuses and pulled out the very next day.

An experience like that ought to have confirmed all the other Democratic candidates in their well established conviction that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was A Good Thing and the World Trade Organization is too. But strangely enough, Gephardt's fate did not deter the others. He was more like a fox, laying a trail that the hounds eagerly chased when they caught the scent, even after they had torn him to bits.

It was Howard Dean of Vermont, that strange precursor of a new or revived Democratic national spirit, who took up the tattered banner. Even in the closing days of the Iowa race, Dean was already scenting around protectionist issues in that curiously prescient, intuitive yet unfocused way of his. Just before flying out of Iowa for his disastrous adventure in trying to woo former President Jimmy Carter two days before the caucuses, he told reporters on his campaign bus that he favors re-negotiating the terms of the WTO and NAFTA.

The former governor said he still believes in free trade but only when it is fair. And it isn't fair when countries like

Mexico and China don't have free trade unions, have vastly lower environmental standards, and appalling records on human rights. "International free trade must not be distorted into a race to the bottom," Dean said.

It was a thoughtful analysis delivered off the cuff in response to a question from this reporter. But no one else paid attention to it amid such epochal issues for the Republic as Dean's odyssey to Georgia or his wife Judy's "blink and you missed it" four-hour daring venture into the Hawkeye State.

In the Jan. 19 caucuses Dean melted down, a victim of his own weirdness and a clumsy campaign. That should have been the end of the jobs and protectionism issue. Sen. John Kerry, after all, had voted for NAFTA along with the Senate Democrat consensus in 1993, and Sen. John Edwards had not exactly been a protectionist hawk during his one and only Senate term.

But as the race inexorably turned into a two-man contest amid the arctic blasts of New Hampshire and then down to the balmy climes of South Carolina, a strange thing happened: the two Senator Johns started picking up trade too. Almost overnight, it went from being the issue of the losers to a staple of the debate between the two frontrunners. How to explain this conundrum?

The answer is simple: Dean was destroyed not by issues but by his personal flaws and appalling strategy. In order to defeat him, more credible and skillful national candidates had to co-

opt his message, and that included protecting jobs and confronting the unfair terms of international trade. By Wisconsin, Dean's Waterloo, Edwards was promising, "I will not sign a trade agreement ... that does not embrace enforceable labor and environmental standards. ... Senator Kerry is entitled ... to support free trade as [he] always [has]." In a state that has lost 75,000 manufacturing jobs, that was good enough to guarantee Edwards a second-place finish and to send Howard Dean home to Vermont. Though it had scarcely been a centerpiece of his campaign, the night Kerry claimed victory over Dean, his speech included a promise to "insist on workers' rights and environmental rights and human rights in every trade agreement."

Edwards perfected his trade pitch to Dean's detriment in Wisconsin, but he had begun to practice in more familiar territory. In South Carolina, a state hit hard by the collapse of its textile industry in the face of foreign competition and the consequent loss of some 400,000 jobs, rank-and-file Democratic voters are less enamored with free trade than the national party leadership. There the biographical fact Edwards most emphasized was not his tremendous success as a trial lawyer but that he is the son of a mill worker. He began turning his signature "two Americas" speech toward trade, pledging that he would negotiate fair trade deals, stand up for U.S. trade rights, and keep companies from relocating abroad. In bilateral trade agreements, he told South Carolinians, "both

sides should give up something, not just America.”

With Gephardt gone and the Dean ranks in disarray, trade policy handed Edwards an issue he could use to differentiate himself from Kerry and to define himself as a populist candidate. Kerry managed to denounce “Benedict Arnold” companies that “ship American jobs overseas,” but his acceptance of \$370,000 in campaign cash from their CEOs made him an unreliable messenger. Nor did Edwards come to the issue with clean hands. Like Kerry, he voted for permanent favored nation status for China, and while he emphasized that he voted against trade pacts with Singapore, Chile, Africa, and the Caribbean that the senator from Massachusetts supported, he could only promise that he wouldn’t have voted for NAFTA if he had been in the Senate, a barbed charge that reminded voters of his political inexperience.

But Edwards had a bigger problem that returned to roost on Super Tuesday. Though many of the states he looked to in his last-ditch effort to halt Kerry’s long march toward the nomination have been deeply affected by the loss of manufacturing jobs—Ohio, Georgia, and upstate New York—by then the industrial unions that backed Dick Gephardt had inexplicably endorsed John Kerry. Still, Edwards pinned his presidential hopes on what he had come to regard as “a moral issue,” appealing to voters who have watched their paychecks and hometowns bleed away with the closing of factories and mills. It wasn’t enough. Edwards is out, but with 2.3 million jobs lost on George W. Bush’s watch, the issue lives on, as John Kerry’s campaign-trail conversion proves.

Throughout his career, Kerry has avoided rocking the boat with the party establishment on trade issues. Yet the way he swept the Missouri primary, with half the total votes cast, showed that even if like St. Paul his conversion hap-

pened late on the Road to the White House, if not Damascus, it came in time for him to do the Lord’s Work just the same. For Missouri, a crucial bellwether state that has gone for the successful presidential candidate in all elections save one in a hundred years, has also been hard hit by the loss of jobs to international competition.

Kerry picked up that scent and began to see the political potency of the trade issue. He called for a 120-day review of all existing trade agreements and pledged not to sign any new ones until the review is complete and its recommendations are in place. He also began pounding the obvious point against Bush: the national jobless rate is low by historical standards, a mere 5.7 percent. But that is still up a long way from the 4.1 percent Bush inherited

appeals and tiptoeing around its harsher prescriptions. And both candidates undermined their own cases by eagerly endorsing that old Democratic mantra of redistributive taxation—as if cutting up the economic pie differently will solve all the problems when the real problem is that the pie itself is shrinking by the day.

Still the Democrats have Bush on the run. His master strategist Karl Rove hoped to steer this campaign in a different direction, keeping Bush above the fray by presenting him as a seasoned “war president”—a plan that got upended by Tim Russert and the Kerry camp’s sniping at Bush’s less than stellar National Guard record. Now the Bush campaign is trying to shift the ground again to make the election, in part, a referendum on gay marriage.

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from Clinton, and it is a massaged, sunnyside picture, artificially depressed by the expanding number of burger-flipping jobs and part-time employment, not to mention the well attested phenomenon of the demoralized poor and long-term unemployed no longer bothering to go through the motions of signing on to look for new work.

With eight months to go to the Big Vote, this presidential election, once again, is all about “the economy, stupid.” It is therefore all about jobs and all about protecting them. The Kerry Attack Machine understands this well, and they are going after Bush as the fabled 1.8 million jobs promised by the his tax cuts and the blessings of international free trade fail to materialize.

Protectionism, of course, is still a virtue that dare not declare its own name. Edwards and Kerry expertly danced around the issue, trumpeting its populist

But through all these smoke screens and myths, prevarications and evasions, one great issue still looms up as inexorable as the iceberg that sunk the Titanic. As the consequences of bad trade deals roll in, what was once a working man’s malady has gone mainstream: the plight of steelworkers now threatens computer programmers. *USA Today* recently published a poll that found that among Americans making more than \$100,000—traditionally free trade’s strongest allies—support has collapsed from 57 percent to 28 percent. Voters know firsthand the truth Gephardt pioneered, Dean advanced, Edwards carried to a second-place finish, and Kerry is now beginning to sample: it’s about jobs and the best way to keep them in America, stupid. ■

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In Praise of Laudanum

For some, “addiction” may be the only cure.

By Jim Pittaway

ONE OF THE ELEMENTS of dramatic tension in the wonderful *Master and Commander* series of books is the relationship between the brilliant and resourceful ship’s surgeon, Dr. Maturin, and the laudanum with which he self-medicates. Author Patrick O’Brian is widely praised for the authenticity of his rendering of the language, behaviors, and mores of Napoleonic times, but here he projects contemporary issues onto his characters and their circumstances. A real Dr. Maturin, like his contemporary Capt. Meriwether Lewis—with his famous “melancholia”—would have been perfectly free to medicate himself to his heart’s content without enduring either social opprobrium or shame and self-doubt. If Rush Limbaugh lived in any other era, we would not be having a national conversation about his behavior and the state would never be pursuing his medical records for evidence of crimes he may or may not have perpetrated upon himself.

Over the decade I have spent as a practitioner licensed by my state to treat, among other things, addiction and addiction-related disorders, I have become increasingly troubled by things other than my patients’ actual use. As I have transitioned from in-patient addiction treatment and private practice to working with head-injured and often severely disabled patients, I have become less doctrinaire about use itself and more aware of complexities of circumstance as they affect individuals. The cases causing me the greatest concern

have one common element: they involve pain medication.

Until the great government power-grab of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, Americans were assumed competent to treat themselves for chronic or acute pain, as well as for what we now imperfectly describe as chemical imbalances of the brain—such as bipolar disorder—by simply stopping at a corner apothecary and purchasing such tincture of opium as they judged appropriate for their needs. This actually went on for centuries without generating serious social or moral problems. Undoubtedly, many individuals became “addicted” and the opportunity for drug “abuse” abounded, but such excesses were the business of family and community. No tyrannical European king or dictator even dreamed of so intruding on the private lives of individuals as to interfere with access to pain relief and psychological equilibrium. At least not until FDR’s Harry Anslinger, of the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, set about criminalizing vast tracts of human behavior in his push to build a crime-fighting empire on behalf of the state whose power he and his boss were so dedicated to expanding.

I should point out that the development of highly refined opiates such as morphine and, later, heroin in the early 20th century changed opiate use, and serious social consequences emerged that were not present in the earlier age of laudanum. Also the proliferation of powerful stimulant, sedative, and hallu-

cinogenic drugs with no significant medical application, but with enormous potential for abuse, contributes to a horrible national and international drug problem. The idea that the family and community, in decline if not disintegration, could provide a bulwark against these problems is laughable. But it is equally fair to say that the magnitude of the drug problem in society coincides with the blanket criminalization of medical as well as non-medical drug use, and the preposterousness of Limbaugh’s pain treatment as a public obsession and a license for abuse of power by the state shows that the “drug problem” is not always just about use.

As I become a more experienced therapist, I am less sanguine about treating addiction as such and not entirely sure that I know what addiction is. The term has been so widely misapplied as to become, like “terrorism,” essentially empty of meaning except in terms of the biases and agenda of the person using it. Addiction is applied to tobacco use by the anti-smoking crowd, to fast food, exercise, sex; so many things, in fact, that if I am going to treat addiction, I may as well be treating Original Sin but, of course, only those elements of the Fall currently out of favor with the state or organized groups and constituencies. This is not healing art; this is the therapist in some Orwellian nightmare as manipulative enforcer of conformity and adversary of spontaneity and individuality. But in a society where choice has come to mean the taking of innocent