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IMPORTANT RESOURCE

After reading the Mother Kali's articles I feel deeply sad. Through friends, and after volunteering in the store a number of times, I have heard the various stories of workers, managers, and board members alike. It is my opinion that no one in this situation is wrong — there are no villains here. I believe everyone involved with the store is doing the best they can.

I also see a lot of fear, distrust, and many old wounds. I imagine that most of the people involved are feeling hurt enough that they just can't hear each other. I think what needs to happen is for everyone concerned to get together in a forum where all of the parties can really listen to each other. Not with lawyers, not with proof or documents, just people talking about what each person wants, airing the sadness and fear, and finding what everyone has in common.

I think Mother Kali's is an important resource for our community and I would hate to see it end. I imagine everyone else close to the store feels the same way.

*G. Darjeeling
Eugene*

CHEAPER'S BETTER

Concerning the non-stop coverage that Mother Kali's Books continues to get I have one simple question: WHO FUCKING CARES?

If the place goes out of business because of the incompetence of the people on the board or those who work there, then people, including feminists and whoever else, will find another place to get the same exact books. Maybe instead of begging for support and help



they could begin to run it like an actual business and give people reasons for wanting to shop there other than "Support your local feminist bookstore." I, like most people, will shop at places that sell what I want at a competitive price. Why should I buy a book at Mother Kali's when I can get it cheaper at Smith Family Bookstore or online?

Instead of being angry that someone would forgo "helping" you by shopping at your store, think of ways that you can make them want to shop there. Then again, I'm sure

this will fall on deaf ears. It's much more enjoyable, I suppose, to feel like you are a victim and that if people would just be compassionate everything would work out.

*Stephen Crawford
Seattle*

HELD HOSTAGE

For almost 18 months the board of directors of Mother Kali's, and former boards, have been held hostage by staff or former staff.

Kumbaya Dammit BY DAN CAROL

Take The Pledge
Solving the 'weenie problem.'

Since we've got 236 days of ugly ads and knife-fighting to go before the Nov. 2 Bush-Kerry face-off, it seems like a good time to talk about laying down some non-presidential (but very key!) bricks on the pathway to progressive power.

The biggest hole we have right now is candidate accountability — you know what I mean — candidates who claim they are progressive or Democrats but then take us for granted once they are in office. Names like Georgia Democrat Zell Miller (who voted for the Bush tax cuts and will soon campaign for him) come quickly to mind. Some call this the "weenie problem." Others are far less charitable in their terminology. Whatever the term of art, it is extremely frustrating to see good laws fail or bad laws pass because votes we relied on went sour.

In the old days, when there was a truly grassroots Democratic Party with block captains on every street, if a candidate voted against the Party line, they'd find someone else to run. Discipline and tough love ruled the day. None of this me-first, "I am going to vote against the Party-line and do-whatever-I-want to get re-elected" kind of stuff. No sirree, you voted with the party like they do in Europe — or you felt the consequences.

So how do we get real accountability back for any progressive party?

Well, like all things progressive, we're not going to fix the whole kit and kaboodle overnight. Most of our Senate and House candidates raise their own money — think of them as free-lance businesses. The problem is that the "weenies" are also franchises that are misusing our brand (Democrat, progressive, whatever our brand is). Right now, the price of our "franchise," let alone getting our vote, is essentially free. That must change. The good news is that we can change the formula — immediately — if the coalition groups that give candidates money start exacting simple pledges before they endorse or donate.

This stuff works. Six-year old Common Cause Congressional pledges turned the tables on four key votes and made the difference in winning campaign finance reform in 2002. On the political right, term limits proponents and anti-tax advocates have had



huge success for the last decade by garnering simple pledges and then hammering elected officials who later try and go back on their word.

So what's a simple pledge for us to consider? We could try a Democratic version of 1994's Contract With America, a 10-point, legislative agenda that Newt Gingrich's Republican Congress passed much of in 1995. Progressive author Arianna Huffington is promoting an idea like this and her new book offers a solid draft of a progressive top 10 list to consider. (Readers can ask her about it directly when her book tour rolls through Eugene on May 6).

Or we could simply get candidates to sign a values-based pledge that helps answer the basic "1,2,3,4 what are we fighting for" question in the-matic terms. Here's one draft:

I pledge that as a progressive candidate for Congress, I will fight for equal economic opportunity and equal access to health care; promote individual privacy, civil liberties and open access to an information commons; end discrimination in all its forms; and support expanded public investment that pays future dividends to our children and the environment.

Too fuzzy for you? No worries. I am for letting a thousand pledges bloom (feel free to post yours at www.kumbayadammit.com)

My friend John is touting a very specific economic pledge that is pure populism and pretty good politics. He wants Democrats to stand for: 1) double taxes on millionaires; 2) four week paid leave; 3) increasing the minimum wage to \$10; 4) offering two years of free college; and 5) giving citizens the same health care as Congress.

The key strategic point here is we need to start getting candidates to take the pledge before we let them take our cash.

That said, we should keep in mind that no single pledge is necessary — different progressive constituencies and groups will have unique issues they will want to use in benchmarking candidate performance.

I'll be encouraging my friends at MoveOn.Org, ProgressiveMajority.org, and GrassrootsDemocrats.com to start the pledge drive. But they'll need all the help they can get.

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