

After defeating pro-war incumbent Lieberman, Lamont reassures Wall Street

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The victory of multi-millionaire cable executive Ned Lamont in the Connecticut Democratic primary August 8 has produced paroxysms of uncritical celebration in liberal publications like the *Nation* and from groups like MoveOn.org, which campaigned heavily for Lamont and against incumbent senator Joseph Lieberman.

Katrina Van Den Heuvel, editor of the *Nation*, declared in her blog that “Lamont’s win is a real victory for progressives... democracy broke out in the State of Connecticut. Here’s hoping this is just the beginning.”

The magazine’s political correspondent John Nichols has provided gushing pro-Lamont coverage throughout the campaign, portraying the primary as a struggle “for the soul of the Democratic Party.”

Eli Pariser, executive director of the MoveOn Political Action Committee, wrote in an op-ed column in the *Washington Post* that Lamont’s victory would compel Democrats like Senator Hillary Clinton to adopt a more antiwar stance. Lamont’s defeat of Lieberman meant the end of Clinton-style “triangulation,” he wrote.

“With triangulation passing, a new era of bolder, principle-driven politics can begin. Lamont’s success should be the opening salvo in a 90-day campaign to establish the clear-cut differences between Democrats and Republicans. Most independent voters, like Democrats, want change, but many of them aren’t sure yet whether Democratic candidates are capable of giving it to them. Now’s the chance to seize that mantle.”

These sentiments will no doubt be reinforced by the decision of the Connecticut Republican Party, the state’s Republican governor, M. Jodi Rell, and the Bush White House to withhold support for the official Republican candidate for the Senate seat, Alan Schlesinger. Lieberman remains on the ballot as the candidate of the Connecticut for Lieberman Party, despite his primary defeat. With the blessing of the Bush administration, he now becomes the unofficial Republican candidate in the

general election.

But those voters who may have illusions in Lamont’s antiwar rhetoric—or have been deceived by the uncritical adulation of the liberals—need only turn to the pages of Wednesday’s *Wall Street Journal* to see the real class basis and political outlook of the Democratic candidate. In an op-ed column headlined, “The Democrats Mean Business: Washington Needs an Entrepreneurial Approach,” Lamont reassures his corporate audience that he will advocate policies entirely compatible with the interests of the capitalist elite—the class to which he and his family have belonged for at least four generations.

Highly significant is the venue in which Lamont chose to publish his opinion piece. The editorial page of the *Wall Street Journal* is one of the filthiest organs of the ultra-right, effusively supporting the main policies of the Bush administration, including the war in Iraq, the attacks on democratic rights at home, and, most of all, the enormous tax cuts for the wealthy which have funneled hundreds of billions of dollars into the pockets of those who make up the newspaper’s target audience.

It was in the *Wall Street Journal* that Senator Lieberman nine months ago published his infamous op-ed column in which he warned opponents of the Iraq war, particularly those within his own party, that their criticisms of the administration were an attack on Bush’s constitutional authority as commander-in-chief. The clear implication was that antiwar activists were unpatriotic, subversive and guilty of providing aid and comfort to Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

This op-ed column provided much of the initial impetus for Lamont’s campaign. The Greenwich multi-millionaire himself declared that he decided to challenge Lieberman for the nomination after reading it. In making his own appearance on the same page, only a week after his primary victory, Lamont is extending an olive branch to the ultra-right.

This is underscored by the content of his column, which does not reproach the *Journal* for its all-out support for the invasion and conquest of Iraq, or for its constant attacks on the integrity, intelligence and intentions of those who oppose Bush's war policies. Instead, Lamont presents himself as a reasonable, pro-business candidate, a businessman himself, who will bring a practical and non-ideological approach to questions of war and terrorism.

The bulk of Lamont's column is a paean to the workings of American capitalism and to his own successes as a capitalist. (Already a millionaire by inheritance from his family's J. P. Morgan fortune, Lamont amassed an estimated \$200 million through his cable-television firm, which specializes in wiring college campuses). Lamont called his business success "a quintessentially American experience. Here, entrepreneurs have the freedom to be successful in ways the rest of the world admires."

Lamont draws four lessons from his business experience which he claims he will apply to the war in Iraq and other public issues. He gives first place to fiscal austerity, denouncing the war as an irresponsible squandering of money and declaring, "I am a fiscal conservative and our people want their government to be sparing and sensible with their tax dollars."

His other lessons—the need to "invest in human resources" through education, the need to stay in touch with customers (i.e., voters), and the need to look at the facts rather than proceed on the basis of preconceived notions—do not rise above the commonplace.

He concludes with a pledge that changing course in Iraq (how exactly, he does not say), does not mean any weakening of US military power. "We start with the strongest, best-trained military in the world, and we'll keep it that way," he declares.

Lamont conceals the real, material reasons for the war in Iraq, as though Bush's personal stubbornness and willfulness were all that mattered. The invasion and occupation of Iraq were not, however, merely the result of the personalities of Bush or Cheney.

It would be impossible to explain on that basis why the entire leadership of the Democratic Party, the nominal "opposition," as well as the entire establishment media endorsed and validated the obvious lies about weapons of mass destruction and Iraq's ties to Al Qaeda that were used by the White House to bludgeon public opinion.

It would be impossible to explain why, more than three years later, long after the war has become an obvious debacle, opposed by a large majority of the American

people, there is no major figure in either party who supports an immediate withdrawal of American troops. Thus, the supposedly antiwar Lamont offers his proposals for "redeployment" of US forces as a means of assuring an American "success" in the war.

The war in Iraq is, fundamentally, an expression of the crisis of American capitalism, whose ruling elite backed the invasion as an effort to seize control of a key strategic position in the oil-rich Middle East by turning the country with the second largest oil reserves in the world into a US protectorate. Control of Iraq, they believed, would give American imperialism the ability to project military power not only in the Persian Gulf, but throughout the Middle East and Central Asia, a decisive advantage against its major foreign rivals in Europe and the Far East.

Lamont focuses his attacks on the Bush administration's incompetence in realizing this imperialist agenda, not on the agenda itself. There is no mention of oil in Lamont's antiwar appeals. Like all of the Democratic critics of the war, he has tacitly accepted the warning issued by Bush himself at the beginning of this year, when he declared that the role of oil in the war should be off-limits as an issue in the 2006 elections.

It is, of course, no surprise to socialists that the great-grandson of a co-founder of the J. P. Morgan empire, himself a capitalist possessed of a fortune approaching a quarter-billion dollars, should seek to disguise the responsibility of the capitalist system for the tragedy in Iraq.



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