

**July 03, 2008**

**Another blow to DNC in Hitchcock case**

**Posted by: Kevin**

The judicial hammer came down yet again on Howard Dean's Democratic National Committee in the lawsuit by former LGBT outreach director Donald Hitchcock last night. And this latest finding by Judge Jeanette Clark is perhaps the most ominous yet for a growing list of high-level Democratic operatives -- including gay and lesbian Democrats at the highest levels of the party -- who have been implicated in an alleged effort to punish Hitchcock for his partner, Paul Yandura, having openly criticized the party for its lack of real commitment -as opposed to lip service- on gay rights.

The *Washington Blade* reports that Judge Clark dismissed a motion by the DNC for summary judgment, turning down an effort by the party to avoid a trial. As if this wasn't enough of a blow, Clark's ruling also revealed that indeed some of the statements already aired in the case, which had been made by Dean as well as openly gay Democratic Party Treasurer Andrew Tobias, may have been defamatory, and that they might have "aided and abetted the DNC by participating in a scheme to discriminate and retaliate that resulted in" Hitchcock's firing from the DNC.

Clark asserted that the facts are indeed in dispute over Hitchcock's firing so soon after Yandura issued an open letter in April 2006 criticizing the Democratic Party's attitude towards the gay community -- particularly in the party's lack of support against state anti-marriage ballot measures. It seems Yandura, an influential voice among gay Dems and a former Clinton White House staffer, broke the cardinal rule of the gay Democratic power structure: he called for gays to withhold donations until the party cleaned up its act. That crossed the line, and it seems to have caused the party leadership to trample every one of its so-called principles around discrimination and fairness, and to retaliate by firing Hitchcock. They then trotted out the whispers about Donald being incompetent, and the timing being a mere coincidence. (Right.)



I've said it before - and I'll say it again. I have never known more fervent, loyal Democrats in my years in Washington as those two. The only reason I knew Donald or Paul was because I frequently clashed with them, sometimes quite heatedly, in my role as flack for Log Cabin Republicans in the 1990s and early 2000s. Donald in particular went for my throat in a post-election panel discussion at the 2000 Creating Change Conference - not exactly friendly territory for me - and I'll never forget it. Believe me - I can attest to their blood loyalty to their party. And no one of any political persuasion who knows Paul Yandura could ever say with a straight face that he issued his open letter in April 2006 as a means to undermine the Democratic Party against the GOP. He was voicing dissent in a way that he felt was necessary to hold his party to the standard it said it was setting for itself on gay rights -- the whole "fight til hell freezes over and then fight on the ice" rhetoric trotted out year after year

by DNC honchos at gay (fundraising) events. Paul was trying to leverage power to get results. Remember that? *Anyone?*

All that Dean and company had to do was admit they broke the law in firing Donald, and make restitution, and I'm willing to bet this whole thing would have gone away and Donald would have gone right back to the front lines.



Instead, they have gone to ground in all their petty arrogance at the DNC and tried every kind of underhanded means to make Donald crawl away in fear. That has turned this case into a cause, and has allowed for the airing of a great deal of damaging correspondence and behind-the-scenes beliefs among DNC staff that show a sort of contempt for the gay community as little more than a cash machine for more important political fights, one that should best be docile and adoring and keep the checks coming.

It's sad because, in reality, the DNC could really live up to the ideals that made Donald and Paul so fervently committed in the first place. The Democratic Party could actually win over people like me. They could get waves of support and dedication -- as could the Human Rights Campaign and other pseudo-party branch organizations in the gay community -- from a lot of now-very-disaffected gay people if they really did show the level of commitment and support and guts that they blather on about promising to have. But time after time, like in this case, they show themselves to be narrow-minded, petty, arrogant jerks who will throw you under the bus at the first sign of problems (or dissent) and then expect you to stand up and support them still, or else. (And no, guys, simply comparing them to the other party isn't an answer.) The Democratic Party's passive-aggressive relationship with many constituencies isn't a new story, but it seems to be one which teaches its leaders no lessons at all episode after episode, chapter after chapter.

The Republican Party under Karl Rove became just as poisoned a well, and has the chance to cast off its detritus from that stewardship in this election. If it doesn't, it will be defeated. But if any gay Democrat thinks that brushing Donald and Paul under the rug is somehow going to be good for gay rights has no right to call anyone else an Uncle Tom from inside their glass houses. Gays who would abet the DNC in illegally firing a gay person and then call on all gays to support their party at any cost are, I would argue, far more self-loathing than any gay Republican.

Here's hoping this suit is settled and Donald is given the respect he deserves. That would be a victory for gay Democrats, and a step forward for their party. But if it goes to trial simply out of blind arrogance, they will live to regret it for years to come.

Posted at 03:28 PM in [DNC](#) | [Permalink](#)