

# Dukakis should stick with liberal beliefs

When Michael Dukakis proudly stated at the Democratic National Convention, "This campaign isn't about ideology, it's about competence," it was clear he had failed to learn the lesson of Ronald Reagan.

Most observers view Reagan's electioneering — and especially his '84 campaign — as a triumph of style over substance in which vague generalities won the day. But is there anyone who can't enumerate Reagan's position on virtually every major divisive issue?

In fact, the crucial swing voters knew about his positions on Contra aid, abortion and the such, disagreed with Reagan but voted for him anyway. Why? Is it because people don't care about the issues? No, it's because people may not agree with a candidate on everything, but they can respect the way he stands up for what he believes in.

Dukakis gave undecided voters no such opportunity. He immediately began to distance himself from his views, unnecessarily allowing Bush to turn "liberal" into a dirty word and putting himself on the defensive.

You may not agree with the assertion that the Space Defense Initiative is a fantasy, but you can respect someone who holds that opinion and defends it intelligently. But Dukakis mocked the program and then later declared he would fund research to the tune of a billion dollars.

Thus he loses three times: He annoys the people who disagree with him, alienates the people who held the same position, and he worries the voters who don't really care about S.D.I. but hate to see intellectual

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## THE FASCIST PIG

wavering. Such backsliding hurt Bush in 1980 and it's hurting Dukakis now.

You may not be thinking of joining the American Civil Liberties Union, but membership is nothing for a presidential candidate to be ashamed of. Yet Dukakis hemmed and hawed about how he didn't really support a lot of what the A.C.L.U. did after Bush turned his affiliation into a hot potato.

You may not like everything a Democratic nominee represents, but that's true of any candidate. However, what are you supposed to think when he selects a running mate who is virtually a moderate Republican? Should you believe he doesn't hold strong beliefs? Or should you believe he is simply a cynical opportunist willing to betray those beliefs for a chance to win?

If the Democrats are ever to regain the White House, they must stop trying to act like Republicans and start eloquently and firmly defending what they believe in.

The message of Ronald Reagan is not to tell long, rambling anecdotes. His political message is that you should stake out the positions you believe in and staunchly remain there, no matter how unpopular they become. There is nothing wrong with being a liberal. But there's a lot wrong with being a liberal and pretending you're not.

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