

**NEW AMERICAN STRATEGIES FOR SECURITY AND PEACE
OCTOBER 28-29, 2003 - WASHINGTON, D.C.
#MR9 - JOHN PODESTA, LEONE, KUTNER**

DICK LEONE

DL: Thank you, John. This is on the theory that I was paying attention. It's impossible to summarize what happened at this conference. We did learn that there is an appetite for conversations of this type and a deep commitment to developing counter-arguments and assessing where we've gone right and where we've gone wrong. There were some sharp disagreements obviously although I think the overall assessment is an impressive amount of agreement even across party lines.

Many of our speakers talked about the importance of remembering the first principles of American foreign policy and multi-nationalism and bipartisanship in these areas. In addition, I think many of the arguments were framed in terms of the importance of having an open debate, not suppressing debate on the basis that it's unpatriotic and that that is the key to building and sustaining the kind of public support we'll need over time.

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There was an awful lot of emphasis on the fact that we squandered some opportunities both domestically and abroad. But that there is still perhaps the potential to regain some of that momentum and unity. A number of speakers talked about the problems that emerge when you build a policy on ideology. Senator Clinton was the most recent this morning.

I think in addition last night's incredible speech by Zbigniew Brzezinski brought home something that I hadn't thought much about that the nation is at risk of one of those crises of confidence and trust that we've had periodically in our history during the McCarthy era, during the Vietnam War, during Watergate. The damage that is done by those of us who are old enough to remember some of those things that is done by that kind of problem - far exceeds any of the brutal bickering or the setbacks that we see today. I hope that is wrong, but the seeds may well be there, and it's a troubling thing indeed.

In addition, focusing on the many references and discussions of Iraq here we are all seekers together now that we're in it whatever we thought beforehand -

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seekers of what's the best policy. Jim Leach proposed something rather drastic. But I think it was revealing that it has come to that in his mind. Senator Hagel talked about a principled realism in dealing with this kind of an issue.

But one thing is clear. That is the immediate problem before this government and before this people and that virtually all of our speakers felt we were going about it the wrong way these are not snowflake memos we're sending out by the way. These are hailstones, we hope, and they last a little while. In addition, what is always a sobering discussion of the dangers of weapons of mass destruction and the inevitability of their becoming easier to make and the imperative of our finding ways to make that our top priority, I think remains one of those subjects to which we must constantly return and not allow that topic to be obscured by whatever today's headlines are about.

We've spent a lot of time at The Century Foundation studying homeland security issues. I wasn't surprised, but I guess in an unfortunate way I was reassured to hear that we're right when we say we

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haven't done anything like the job we should have done two years out. I wish I had heard from the people who came to this conference that we were on the wrong track. I think we are still on the right track. I think we're still on the wrong track.

Finally, I think the final lesson about this is - most of it's been criticism of the administration - is not that they're bad people but there are a couple of old lessons we need to remember. That decency is sadly no substitute for intellect, and ideology is really no instrument for finding the truth. At the end of the day careful analysis, an open mind, a liberal interpretation of what participation involves and what arguments are relevant are more likely to lead us to truth. The truth is a more important value even than loyalty in public life and in any nation, and the truth for us now is we have to find a new course and we have to be open to it. Thank you. (Applause)