

What do you stand for?

Opposition to Trump is not a platform, Democrats

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The Democratic National Committee in May released a draft — in desperate need of an editor and a proofreader — of its long-awaited autopsy of what went wrong in the 2024 campaign.

For those who would rather not wade through the almost 200 pages of propaganda and self-deception, let me help.

According the DNC, which made it clear that it did not own the autopsy, the Democrats are slipping off the rope because of former President Biden, former first lady Jill Biden, their inability to connect with voters, former Vice President Kamala Harris or whatever.

The autopsy mostly skips over the Democrats' inability to articulate or offer substantive alternative policy approaches to those offered by President Trump, other Republicans or even worse, the Democratic Socialists of America.

I thought about that last week when David Crowley started his campaign for governor of Wisconsin by calling on Democrats to unite around opposing Mr. Trump's "MAGA extremism."

Mr. Crowley, for those with a poor memory, had just defeated Francesca Hong, the darling of the current Fifth Column, for the Democratic nomination for governor.

Mr. Crowley, who won by 3,000 votes out of 750,000 cast in Tuesday's election despite outspending his opponent by a 12-1 margin, is planning on a unity tour to emphasize that all has been forgiven between the two factions wrestling for control of the Democratic Party.

There is one problem with that. In politics, like in much of life, those who have direction, purpose and energy tend to do a lot better than time servers. Candidates who run campaigns focused on what they want to achieve almost always beat campaigns run by clubhouse hacks whose entire pitch to the voters is that it is their turn to win and to rule.

Establishment Democrats such as Mr. Crowley and his funders and operatives fall squarely into the camp of entitled hacks. For the last decade, they have been selling reflexive, unreflecting opposition to Mr. Trump and whatever stray thought he might have in mind at the moment.

That gets votes and sometimes wins elections, but it is pretty thin gruel in the way of a governing philosophy. At some point, voters are going to demand — and winning candidates are going to need — some sort of idea or blueprint about what might happen next.

Child communists such as New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani, Michigan U.S. Senate candidate Abdul El-Sayed and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, New York Democrat, understand that and are usually prepared with at least the rudiments of a few handy and easy-to-pitch policy ideas. Wealth tax? Data center moratorium? Single-payer health care? Open borders? Abolishing the police (and the Constitution)? Yep, the DSA has something for all of those. It even has an overarching platform of sorts.

Meanwhile, back in Wisconsin, the newest empty suit offered this: “We’re not all going to agree on everything. But I think we agree that the ultimate goal is making sure that we don’t have a MAGA extremist and congressman Tom Tiffany sitting in the governor’s office.” He went on to note that Wisconsin “has a grand opportunity in putting some level of check on Trump’s agenda.” It is that sort of vapidness that has opened the door to the DSA shock troops.

If someone can’t or won’t explain to you what they plan to do if you put them in charge of anything from mowing lawns to being governor, you shouldn’t hire them. The Republicans, salesmen by nature, are usually pretty good at the sales pitch.

The Democrats, however, have failed that test for most of my life, with the exception of President Obama, who was quite clear that he wanted to fundamentally transform the United States of America, and not in a good way.

Team DSA does a pretty good job of explaining what it would do if we throw it the ball. Until the Democrats get better at that, every primary election — and perhaps every general election too — is going to be an adventure.