

Norman Lear's First Century



by Bruce Bawer

Norman Lear celebrated his 100th birthday on Wednesday. In the 1970s, Lear was famous as a TV producer, the remarkably fecund creator of “All in the Family,” “Maude,” “The Jeffersons,” “Sanford and Son,” “Good Times,” and other classic comedy series of that decade. Over the last four decades, however, Lear chief creative endeavor has been to act as a loyal Democrat pouring millions of dollars into the party’s coffers while parroting the party line anywhere he could get an audience.

In 1991, Lear founded People for the American Way (PFAW), a group dedicated to promoting the party’s platform and advancing its fortunes—although Lear himself, of course, would never put it that way.

Ever since he started PFAW, he’s been using over-the-top patriotic rhetoric to suggest that it’s not just people on the

Right who love their country. Indeed, he's often made it clear between the lines—even though he's denied it up and down—that he regards people to his political right as bigots, knaves, and morons. In the inevitable [New York Times](#) article that he wrote to commemorate his centenary, he referred in his usual way to “the people and country I love.” He cited his World War II service as proof that he is “a flag-waving believer in truth, justice and the American way.”

In truth, as far as Lear is concerned, it's either the Democrats' way or the highway.

Typically, only a few sentences into his birthday article, Lear rants about the “attack on Congress” on January 6, 2021, and what he describes as Donald Trump's attempt “to prevent the peaceful transfer of power.” Toeing the current Democratic Party line, Lear praises U.S. Representative Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.)—daughter of a man whom he [called](#) a “meathead” eight years ago—and even suggests her “resolve” and “commitment to exposing the truth” would have won the respect of Archie Bunker, the conservative *paterfamilias* on “All in the Family.”

It wasn't surprising to see Lear endorsing a Stalinist show trial run by his own party, with no provision for cross-examination or dissent. This is a man who, in the early days of PFAW, tried to resurrect the FCC's “fairness doctrine,” that appalling government intrusion on free speech introduced in 1949 and finally abolished in 1987, to silence broadcasters he disliked. The fact that the broadcasters then in question were people of whom I wasn't fond either—namely, televangelists like Pat Robertson and Jimmy Falwell—doesn't make me consider Lear's gambit any less reprehensible.

At around the same time, PFAW produced an ABC special, “I Love Liberty,” that wasn't subject to the fairness doctrine because it was billed as entertainment, not political expression—even though, as the *Times* itself more or less [admitted](#), the whole

thing was a cleverly packaged piece of soft-sell left-wing agitprop. The “Internationale,” as it were, sung to the tune of “God Bless America.”

This has been Lear’s *modus operandi* all along—to wave Old Glory even as he strives to associate it with every manner of progressive claptrap that is a total affront to America’s founding virtues.

You could see the naked partisanship on display in his birthday piece. For all his hand-wringing about January 6, there wasn’t a word of criticism about, say, the mass vandalism and arson committed in the last couple of years by antifa and Black Lives Matter rioters or about the tyrannical and destructive COVID lockdowns imposed by Democratic governors.

Nor did Lear mention the horrific way in which the Democrats’ one-party rule in his own state of California has transformed its once-great cities into drug- and crime-ridden Third World hellholes and caused tens of thousands of the taxpaying middle-class to flee—all the while admitting a flood of illegal aliens, thereby making Malibu-type nabobs like Lear feel good about themselves.

When Gavin Newsom, the state’s incompetent governor, was faced with a recall election last year, Lear gave Newsom his full backing, tweeting that the supporters of Republican opponent Larry Elder were a pack of “anti-vaxxers, QAnon conspiracy theorists, anti-immigrant activists, and Trump supporters.”

Bottom line: nothing on Democratic Left is alien to Lear. He’s hung out with the party’s vilest creeps, such as [mud-throwing](#) Media Matters sociopath David Brock, and routinely tweets his praise for hacks like John Kerry, whose appointment as Biden’s climate envoy he [cheered](#) as if it actually meant climate change was about to go the way of the dodo.

All you need to know about PFAW is that when Lear founded it,

he installed as its first president Bill Clinton lackey Anthony Podesta, who has since lobbied on behalf of Saudi Arabia and Huawei. His brother and lobbying partner, John Podesta, as Clinton's White House chief of staff promoted strategies such as the sweeping use of executive orders to enshrine policies that lacked congressional—and public—support.

American way, indeed.

Given all this, it's no surprise that the leading donor to PFAW in recent years has been the vile George Soros' Open Society Foundations. According to [Influence Watch](#), PFAW "consistently attacks so-called 'dark money' in politics, even though it was created as a project of the Tides Foundation, a donor-advised fund provider which allows contributors to obscure the endpoint of their contributions. Moreover, PFAW registered to become a 501(c)(4) lobbying group and did not have to disclose its donors, the very type of arrangement that PFAW classifies as 'dark money' when practiced by conservatives."

Lear said recently that PFAW "embraces every single human being." In practice, this means the organization is firmly on the side of labor unions, race hustlers, "community organizers," teachers' unions, "Latinx" activists, and even the occasional murderer. (Lear once signed an ad in support of convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal).

Among PFAW's enemies: any hard-working, law-abiding American who likes voter-ID laws, who's troubled by open borders, sanctuary-city laws, and smash-and-grab criminals who benefit from catch-and-release policies, and who may be dubious about hysterical climate-change rhetoric spewed by the billionaire owners of private jets and seaside mansions.

Oh, well. Happy belated birthday, Norman Lear. You made some great TV shows. I hope that in your second century you'll be

politically savvier than you were in your first.

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