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One Question for Chuck Schumer

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The one phrase that Democrats in the US Senate and elsewhere in that party's leadership use more than any other to smear the men and women President Bush has nominated for key positions in our government is: "right-wing extremist." They drowned John Bolton in it, hurled it at Harriet Miers, and they tried to pin it on John Roberts. They started plastering it all over Samuel Alito, even before the President actually nominated him for the Supreme Court early Monday morning.

Oddly, none of the Democrats who use this phrase has ever defined it. And to the best of my knowledge, no hot-shot Washington reporter or anchor-mammal has thought to ask for a definition. Well, it's about time someone did. And since no Democrat uses this phrase more often – or more sneeringly – than Senator Charles Schumer of New York, presumably it ought to be a piece of cake for him to answer this question:

"Precisely what views must an individual hold to be a "right-wing extremist"?"

For instance, is anyone who's pro-life, or who thinks their kids' schools should let parents know before organizing an abortion for their daughter, a "right-wing extremist"? Is anyone who thinks it's okay for kids to pray in school, or to recite the Pledge of Allegiance, a "right-wing extremist"? Are you a "right-wing extremist" if you believe our economy is over-regulated, and that entrepreneurs should have a bit more elbow-room to create jobs for all the rest of us? How about anyone who thinks the United Nations is a vicious kleptocracy that can only be saved with a dose of tough love? Or anyone who thinks that other countries can behave however they like, but if they attack the US or lend support to those who do – we ought to kick their rear ends and not apologize for it?

If anyone actually does press Chuck Schumer for an answer, no doubt this Harvard Law School graduate will try to weasel out of it by pointing out that leading Republicans have never defined the phrase: "left-wing extremist." (Republican leaders don't use it, either, but he won't mention that.) Still, the senator will have a point. So, in the interests of saving time of giving the senator a head start on the kind of answer I'm seeking – in other words, of shoving him into a corner – here goes:

any time before birth.

- That our Judeo-Christian heritage is an abomination, that religion ought to be removed from the public square, and that our country should become a secular society.
- That the State, rather than parents, should have the primary responsibility for raising children.
- That private enterprise should be tolerated, because it generates the wealth for politicians to redistribute, but that entrepreneurs are evil.

In addition, a “left-wing extremist” is a politician who:

- Professes to love our country, but who shows more concern for the rights of terrorists than for the survival of the Americans they’re trying to kill.
- Shows up at every memorial service for the victims of 9-11, but whose speeches and votes make clear that he or she really believes the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were legitimate responses to US policy, and that in effect we “had it coming.”
- Uses the phrase “I support our troops” as a code-word for “I hope we lose the war in Iraq so the Bush Administration will be a failure.”

I’ve had the television on while I write, and in the hour or so I’ve been working on this essay I’ve heard Democrats use the phrase “right-wing extremist” at least a dozen times. No doubt we’ll be hearing it a lot more in the run-up to the Senate judiciary committee’s hearings on the Alito nomination. Surely, it isn’t asking too much for those who use this phrase to tell us what it means.

Over to you, Senator.

Herbert E. Meyer and his wife, Jill, have just made the ebook version of their best-selling handbook, [How to Write](http://www.howtowritebook.com), available for the astounding, never-before-matched price of just \$1.99 at www.howtowritebook.com. Herb is willing to provide a free copy to Senator Schumer. Jill isn't.

Herbert E. Meyer

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