

Power to the People?

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In the 1960s, left-wing radicals loved to shout, “Power to the People.” They didn’t mean it then, and the aging extremists sure don’t mean it now. Laura Ingraham means it—she even wrote a splendid book by that title. Luckily for us, she’s not one of them. Indeed, she’s a proud Roman Catholic and a strong defender of democracy.

But not the Left. They hate democracy. Indeed, the thing they fear most is “Power to the People.” They don’t want, as Lincoln said, government by the people, for the people and of the people. They want government by them for us. Here are a few recent examples.

There has never been a state where the people have voted in favor of gay marriage. In 2004, the issue was placed on the ballot in 11 states, and it lost in every one of them. Not even the voters in Oregon, which are among the most liberal in the nation, were prepared to sanction marriage between two guys or two gals.

California is pretty liberal, too, and in 2000 the people voted to reject gay marriage. But on May 15, the California Supreme Court voted 4-3 to allow same-sex marriage. Chief Justice Ronald M. George, writing for the majority, said, “In view of the substance and significance of the fundamental constitutional right to form a family relationship, the California Constitution properly must be interpreted to guarantee this basic civil right to all Californians....”

This is a curious ruling. First of all, homosexuals cannot—because of nature—form families. Some disagree with this reasoning by pointing out that gays can adopt children.

True enough, but that is only because of the union between a man and a woman. In other words, homosexual families depend upon the sexual capital of heterosexuals.

More important, if forming families is such a “basic civil right,” why isn’t it in the U.S. Constitution? Are we to believe that the Framers overlooked that one? And precisely where in the California Constitution does it say anything about this issue?

The fact is that four unelected judges decided to make up a right out of whole cloth and impose their vision of the family on the public, going against the express will of the people as recorded in Proposition 22 in 2000. It so happens that the very same issue will be before the voters in California in November. But not if the ACLU and gay rights groups have their way—they are trying to stop the measure from being on the ballot!

Want to see another example of tyranny disguised as democracy? Following the California ruling, Gov. David A. Paterson of New York directed all state agencies to change their policies regarding the recognition of gay marriages performed in other states. In one full swoop, he overturned 1,300 statutes and regulations governing marriage. This was striking on several levels.

New York State does not have a law recognizing gay marriages. Yet its chief executive wants to allow married gays from California to enjoy rights in New York that the people in the Empire State never voted to recognize for their own homosexual residents. It is worth noting, too, that Governor Paterson was never elected the governor of New York: He succeeded Gov. Eliot Spitzer—another gay marriage advocate—when Spitzer had to quit over his involvement in a prostitution ring. Yet this unelected man has now decided that he knows what is best for the people, their will to the contrary.

In Florida, "Power to the People" came under attack in June when left-wing activist organizations, working in tandem with the selfish interests of the teachers unions, decided to sue the state to stop the people from having the right to decide for themselves whether they want school choice programs.

In November, the people of Florida are slated to vote on school voucher programs, but in June the enemies of religious freedom took steps to stop them: the ACLU, the ADL, Americans United for Separation of Church and State and People for the American Way filed suit trying to block the people from voting on two amendments to their state's constitution. Their fear, of course, is that if the people have their way, too many of them—especially the poor—will elect to send their kids to a Catholic school.

Forget the issues for a moment. What is at stake is greater than the consequences of toying with the institution of marriage or allowing parents to exercise school choice. What is at stake is democracy. Should unelected judges, and unelected governors, along with unelected activist lawyers, be making decisions about matters that are the proper reserve of the people?

What is so amazingly hypocritical about all this is that these same people are the ones who accuse the Catholic Church of trying to "impose" its will on the people. As Pope John Paul II said many times, we don't impose anything—we propose. But the Left knows a few things about imposing its will, and it will stop at nothing to achieve it.

"Power to the People"? You bet. But beware of those who sing the lyrics while violating its precepts.