What Democrats believe
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A presidential primary is a way for a political party to make up its mind. Through the process of nominating a candidate, a party figures out its stances on the new issues and what adjustments, if any, it will make in its positions on the old. So with that, through their collective rhetoric and actions, the 10 Democratic candidates have arrived at the outlines of a rough philosophy -- the credo of the Democrats of '04.

This credo is often nonsensical and hypocritical, but it is clearly discernible. The Democrats of '04 believe:

That wars should be authorized, but never fought.

That the United Nations is the world's last, best hope, and every jot of its writ should always be respected, unless it inconveniences Saddam Hussein.

That nation-building is always a humanitarian and just cause, unless it is undertaken in Iraq.

That anyone who said Saddam had weapons of mass destruction prior to the war was lying, unless his or her name is Bill Clinton, Al Gore, Madeleine Albright, Bill Cohen, John Kerry or Joe Lieberman, or the person ever served in the Clinton cabinet or as a Democratic senator.

That French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin is always right.

That President Bush isn't devoting enough resources to the reconstruction of Iraq, and that -- in light of his $87 billion aid proposal -- he is devoting far too many resources to the reconstruction of Iraq.

That George Bush maneuvering the United States into war is an act of manipulative genius, and also is very stupid.

That (fill in blank with latest conflict here) is another Vietnam.

That the U.S. military is overextended -- and should be smaller.

That unilateral U.S. diplomatic pressure is always wrong, unless it is brought to bear on Israel.

That it is absolutely necessary for the cause of clean government for candidates to abide by the limits set by the presidential public-financing system, unless they -- like Kerry and Howard Dean -- have enough money not to.

That big money corrupts politics, unless it is big money raised by California Gov. Gray Davis.

That punch-card ballots are a travesty of justice, unless they elect a Democrat (as they did in California just one year ago).

That Bush is bankruptcy the federal government, but is a tightfisted ogre for countenancing only a $400 billion new prescription-drug benefit.
That Bush is fiscally profligate, but isn’t spending enough on education, "first responders," health care or anything else not called "defense."

That the nation cannot afford the pending retirement of the baby boomers, but the baby boomers should get more benefits for their pending retirements.

That Bush is responsible for an economic downturn that began before he was elected and that Clinton is responsible for an economic recovery that began before he was elected (here at last -- a kind of consistency!).

That small-business owners are the heart of the economy unless they succeed, at which point they become "the rich."

That it is evil to be rich, unless you got that way by marrying Teresa Heinz.

That it is wrong to be a millionaire, unless you got that way by suing people.

That the sons of the upper-crust Northeastern elite are always and everywhere out-of-touch, unless they are named Howard Dean.

That it is unseemly to mix military matters with politics,

but you should vote for FORMER GENERAL Wesley Clark, and salute when you do so.

That a deranged candidate should not be elected president, unless he is named Bob Graham.

That no child should be left behind, unless it is in an urban public-school system.

That no child should be left behind, unless it is in the womb.

That the Patriot Act is denying Americans their liberties, and John Kerry, Joe Lieberman, John Edwards or Bob Graham should be elected president after having voted for it.

That deposing John Ashcroft would be preferable to deposing Mullah Omar.

That library records are sacred, but the Constitution -- a "living document" subject to manipulation by judges -- is not.

Rich Lowry is editor of National Review, a TownHall.com member group.