

WisDems: Journal Sentinel details Dan Kelly's history of extreme positions

Posted on Monday, Mar 6, 2023

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MADISON, Wis. — New reporting from the [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#) today unearthed a series of blog posts written by far-right candidate for Wisconsin Supreme Court Dan Kelly in which Kelly attacked essential programs like Social Security and Medicare as the government “stealing” from taxpayers, railed against marriage equality, and claimed abortion access promoted “sexual libertinism.”

Kelly's blog posts reaffirm the extreme views he's displayed throughout his career. In 2013, Kelly [compared Social Security to slavery](#) and in 2016 [offered gushing praise of Justice Antonin Scalia's dissent in Obergefell v. Hodges](#), the landmark U.S. Supreme Court cases recognizing marriage equality. In the race for Wisconsin Supreme Court, all three leading anti-abortion groups in Wisconsin have endorsed Kelly.

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel: [Bice: Dan Kelly once said legal abortion promotes 'sexual libertinism' and government assistance is 'stealing'](#)

Want a look inside of state Supreme Court candidate Dan Kelly's head?

These days, the former justice spends his time repeatedly criticizing his opponent, Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Janet Protasiewicz, for talking openly about her “values” on hot-button political issues while he remains mute on the subjects. The two square off in next month's general election.

But that wasn't always the case.

Between 2012 and 2015, Kelly regularly contributed to a blog called “Hang

Together” in which he laid out in detail — indeed, long and windy detail — his conservative views on a number of topics.

Abortion rights? Kelly said everyone knows this procedure “takes the life of an unborn child.” But he said pro-choice groups still favor making abortion legal. “Why? To preserve sexual libertinism” — or, more bluntly, to let people have sex whenever they want.

He said the push to allow same-sex couples to marry was about “using the power of the state to compel others to legitimize the same-sex couples’ personal arrangements. But that forced legitimization is itself an illegitimate exercise of state power.”

But he saved his strongest words for the social programs that help the poor and elderly. Kelly, 59, was in his late 40s and early 50s at the time that he wrote these posts, which have since been deleted from the internet.

First, Kelly suggested that America’s welfare system is “about as advanced as you can get without actually sliding into socialism.”

The country is “stealing” from working Americans and transferring the money to people who are “allergic to the idea that there is a necessary connection between work and what it produces.” Those being taxed to provide for the safety net are victims of “involuntary servitude,” meaning they are not allowed to keep the fruits of their labor.

And who benefits, according to Kelly? Social Security and Medicare are for those who “have chosen to retire without sufficient assets to support themselves,” and welfare lends a helping hand to those who “don’t create enough to sustain themselves during their working years.”

As for race, he had little to say in the blog.

You have to go to the chapter he wrote for a 2014 book on American philosopher John Rawls to get his take on affirmative action, as the Journal Sentinel reported in 2016 when he was appointed by Republican Gov. Scott Walker to the high court. Kelly included a copy of the chapter in his judicial application.

“Affirmative action and slavery differ, obviously, in significant ways. ... But it’s more a question of degree than principle, for they both spring from the same taproot,”

Kelly wrote. "Neither can exist without the foundational principle that it is acceptable to force someone into an unwanted economic relationship. Morally, and as a matter of law, they are the same."

What are voters to take from this? It seems there are two key questions:

Would Kelly set aside these strongly held policy positions to rule fairly on the cases before him if elected to the Supreme Court? Or would he find legal arguments to justify legislating this right-wing agenda from the bench if he wins in April?

The Protasiewicz camp clearly believes it's the latter.

"Wisconsinites believe in fairness and common sense, not Dan Kelly's extreme views opposing reproductive freedom, marriage equality, and even Social Security," Protasiewicz spokesman Sam Roecker said. "Dan Kelly is out-of-touch with this state and clearly lacks the judgment and impartiality we need on the Supreme Court."

But Ben Voelkel, spokesman for Kelly, said the former justice knows what he must do to rule fairly.

"Justice Kelly's views on these matters are his own, and the role of a jurist is to set aside personal political views and decide cases based solely on the law," Voelkel said. "His service on the Supreme Court clearly demonstrates that his decisions are the product of the law alone."

[...]

On the economy, he said President Barack Obama's win in 2012 was a victory for the "socialism/same-sex marriage/recreational marijuana/tax increase crowd."

"Our economy is taking on more of socialism's distinctiveness as it casts off capitalism," Kelly wrote.

In fact, he said the current system of providing welfare to those in need breeds resentment in taxpayers and envy in the recipients. No one benefits from such a system, he said.

"Welfare recipients do not receive their checks as manna from heaven," Kelly wrote. "Someone created that wealth and then the government forcibly took it."

Instead, it is the church that should be acting compassionately and helping the tens of millions of people in need in our society. But that's not happening. The church has been letting the state "eat its lunch."

But it wasn't always doom and gloom about America's future. He found one occasion to wonder why aspects of the Thanksgiving holiday are offensive to some racial and ethnic groups.

"What part of this engenders such antipathy?" Kelly asked. "I know there are those fringe elements who still can't get over the fact that the United States exists (and the Irish are supposed to be the champion grudge-holders?). Is it that? Or is there something else at work here?"

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