

The "Evil Eight" – Plus 30 by Dan Jacoby

The New York state Senate voted down a bill that would have extended civil marriage rights to same-sex couples. Eight Democrats voted "no," joining all 30 Republicans to defeat the bill 38-24.

Is it fair to call those 38 Senators "evil," or is that going too far?

At most, two of the 38 could claim that they would probably lose their jobs if they voted yes; I'll get back to them later. First, I'd like to address the reason why the other 36 voted they way they did.

They don't believe that all people are created equal.

They would deny people full participation in society because they get the heebie-jeebies at the thought of ... well, actually, they prefer not to think of the possibility that two people of the same gender would want to show their love for each other in a physical way. (One wonders how many of the males in the group, have ever enjoyed watching lesbian porn.)

They refuse to accept the possibility that people fall in love because of who they are and not because of a "lifestyle choice." They prefer to sit comfortably behind the bigotry that they probably soaked up with their mother's milk.

That's the explanation, and it renders them un-American and hypocritical. They are un-American because they don't believe in a basic American tenet, as expressed in American documents going back to the Declaration of Independence. They are also hypocrites, because they have risen to power within the American system by promising to support and uphold that system, but they clearly do not believe in it.

There are lots of people in the world who don't like America, and they are not all evil. Many of them are, but many are just angry over one or more of the hideous things America has done to them, their families, or their country (for example, see "Shah of Iran"). But hypocrisy is the worst of all possible sins, for hypocrites know they are sinners and will neither confess to their sin nor take steps to change or atone. Hypocrites are merely evil. Period.

As for the one or two who might say that they would like to vote yes but were afraid of losing their job if they did, there are several arguments that can be made. Interestingly, these arguments can also apply to the rest of the "party of no."

One argument was made, rather late, during the vote; Senator Parker noted that of the thousands of people who have served in the New York state legislature, only a handful had been defeated at the poll over one vote. The experience of Assembly members who had voted yes the first time they had the opportunity, none of whom lost his or her job, is also instructional. In addition, a Senator who had the guts to stand up and vote yes in a conservative district was assured of massive support next year.

The second argument is that being an elected official is not supposed to be a sinecure. Elected officials have no right to assume that they deserve to be reelected, ever. This is a basic fact that is all too rarely brought home to elected officials in a way they can understand, as the power of incumbency is enormous. Of the 28 New York City Council members who voted to extend their own term limits and then ran for a third term, only five were defeated, and that was considered to be a huge number.

Third, as Edmund Burke, a seventeenth century Irish member of the British Parliament, wrote, "Your representative owes you, not his industry only, but his judgment; and he betrays, instead of serving you if he sacrifices it to your opinion." Senators must not sacrifice proper judgment to the opinion of the people of their district, even if it costs them their elected office.

The moral emptiness of an elected official's argument that his or her vote is merely expressing the view of the activists in the district (not always the same as the opinion of the majority) is not only apparent, but repugnant. In any given district of 300,000 people there are bound to be many with opinions on both sides of any argument. A representative's vote, whichever way it is cast, is going to go against some large group of constituents; claiming to be voting with one's constituents is a phony argument, concealing the true desire of the elected official to vote that way anyway – in other words, it is hypocritical, and we have already dealt with that trait above.

In answer, then, to the question of whether it is right and proper to call these 38 naysayers "evil," the answer is yes. Their vote is hypocritical and hateful, designed to deny people their full humanity based solely on bigotry. It brings shame on themselves, the legislative body of which they are a member, and the entire state of New York.

They are evil, and must be exorcised from the power structure.