

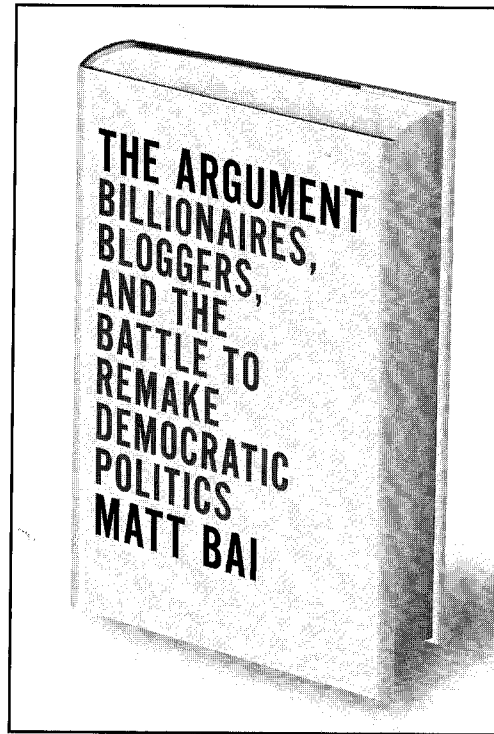
Dean's response was a polite but firm no. This was the problem with the Democratic Party, he argued: it was always lurching drunkenly from one campaign season to the next, wantonly throwing every dollar it had into trying to win the next election while local Democratic parties got smaller

the ovations on the edge of the Arctic tundra, while virtually everyone else in the party could think of nothing else but battleground states and the coming election. The Democratic establishment was nonplused. Washington insiders had never liked Dean or what he stood for, and the feeling was plenty mutual, but they had granted him an uneasy truce since his election as chairman. Now, over expense account lunches at Charlie Palmer or the Capital Grille, party lobbyists and consultants asked each other the same questions over and over. What in creation was going on in Dean's addled brain? Just what was that little fucker trying to prove?

From
The Argument

By
Matt Bai

"Now, suddenly, even pessimistic Washington Democrats saw a very real chance to take back one or both houses of Congress, ending the long era of Republican rule, and they were determined not to let it slip away. The party's House and Senate leadership zeroed in on about a dozen Senate races and some forty House districts in such perennially competitive states as Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Florida and Ohio. These were the states they had to win, and they asked Dean—begged him, really—to help them do it. They needed the national party to pay for TV ads and field programs in the places where every dime mattered and where Republicans would enjoy a financial advantage of tens of millions of dollars.



and weaker. Dean wanted to spend his money reaching out to all those voters whom the party had effectively written off over the years: white rural men and their families in the South and on the Plains, the kind of people who didn't think "Bible study" referred to a college humanities course. He was investing the party's cash in a way that would yield returns further on down the road, and no one was going to talk him into blowing it all at the nearest all-night casino, no matter how tantalizing the odds.

So there was Dean, soaking up

