NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2001

Green Presses Attack Tactics, Accusing Rival of Inconstancy

By JONATHAN P. HICKS
and RANDAL C. ARCHIBOLD

The Democratic campaign for Thursday's mayoral runoff took on a more personal tone yesterday, as Mark Green sought to portray himself as someone who would not change his opinions on issues like abortion and the death penalty for political gain — implying, none too subtly, that Fernando Ferrer is someone who would.

While Mr. Green made his attack, there was a political spectacle of sorts in Brooklyn as Mr. Ferrer campaigned with former Mayor Edward I. Koch and the Rev. Al Sharpton — two former adversaries whose sudden jovial camaraderie marked another twist in a campaign that now seems to have had a lot of them. It was the first time either Mr. Koch or Mr. Sharpton could remember uniting on the stump for any candidate.

Mr. Green went on the offensive at an appearance at the City University of New York's Graduate Center in Manhattan. "On fundamental issues of principle and conviction I have never wavered and I never will," Mr. Green said. "I have been for choice and against the death penalty in 1960, 1980, 1997 and 2001."

The death penalty and abortion, used as an indicator of mayoral fidelity.

Mr. Green said: "A candidate's consistency on fundamental values like choice and the death penalty say an awful lot about their consistency, their courage, their conviction, their leadership and their character. I've been consistent, so you know what I've said before is what I'll do as mayor."

In the past few days, Mr. Green has assailed his rival in the Democratic runoff more intensely in an effort to blunt any advantage Mr. Ferrer might have gained from a series of recent events.

The Bronx borough president came in first in the Sept. 25 primary, won the endorsement of the city's three major unions and has been seen as surging because of his decision to reject Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani's request that he be allowed a three-month extension of his term.

Yesterday, Mr. Green fervently portrayed himself as the candidate with the most steadfast convictions and principles. Standing at Mr. Green's side, Representative Jerrold L. Nadler of Brooklyn directly assailed Mr. Ferrer. "Borough President Ferrer has had four distinct positions on the death penalty in just the last five years," he said. "Whenever the political necessity has dictated, Freddy Ferrer has changed his position."

Mr. Ferrer had said he was an opponent of the death penalty until 1997, when, during a campaign for mayor that he eventually abandoned, he announced a change of heart. This year, he said he supported a moratorium on the death penalty, pointing to evidence that innocent people were being sent to death row.

Also in 1997, Mr. Ferrer expressed concern about abortions, saying: "I have problems with unlimited abortions. You know? Every time a mother hiccups, that's no reason to abort a child." Mr. Ferrer's aides now describe the earlier comment as unfortunate and note that Mr. Ferrer long ago apologized.

Mr. Ferrer, in response to Mr. Green's remarks yesterday, at first faulted Mr. Green for "negative campaigning."

When pressed, Mr. Ferrer noted that Kelli Conlin, executive director of the New York chapter of the National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League, had said both candidates support abortion rights. On the death penalty, Mr. Ferrer would say only that he supports a moratorium on executions to allow closer scrutiny of pending cases, and he suggested that the issue was not relevant.

"I am not running, nor is he, for judge, jury, D.A.," Mr. Ferrer said as reporters kept up questions about his position. "We're running for mayor. And I thought he would join me in talking about affordable housing, better public schools, after-school programs, better access to health care in this city and permanently good police-community relations."

Mr. Ferrer's campaign appearance with Mr. Koch and Mr. Sharpton, as well as with Ruth W. Messinger and Sal F. Albanese, the former city officials, was meant to demonstrate the breadth of his support. But it also featured Mr. Koch's and Mr. Sharpton's embracing and bantering with one another before a throng of cameras. "I like him, I think he is a highly intelligent, affable person," Mr. Koch said of Mr. Sharpton.

Mr. Sharpton said, "For Ed Koch and I to walk with the next mayor through the streets of Brooklyn sends the healthiest picture during some very critical times."

They greeted one another like old friends. "Here he is, the man. Look at that thin man," Mr. Koch said as Mr. Sharpton arrived.

CITY_21MC100_011830817

NYC-WTC_000413259