

© 2006 CBS Broadcasting Inc.  
All Rights Reserved

***PLEASE CREDIT ANY QUOTES OR EXCERPTS FROM THIS CBS  
TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION. "***

*CBS News*

# ***FACE THE NATION***

*Sunday, August 20, 2006*

**GUESTS:** Senator JOSEPH LIEBERMAN (D-CT)  
Running as an Independent  
Candidate

**JIM VANDEHEI**  
National Political Reporter,  
The Washington Post

**MODERATOR: BOB SCHIEFFER - CBS News**

*This is a rush transcript provided  
for the information and convenience of  
the press. Accuracy is not guaranteed.  
In case of doubt, please check with*

***FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS  
202-457-4481***

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, an exclusive interview with Senator Joe Lieberman. Two weeks ago, three-term Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman lost the Democratic primary to political newcomer Ned Lamont. Connecticut Democrats thought the senator was too close to the president and didn't like his support of the war. Now he's running as an Independent who says we can't walk away from Iraq. Will the race become a bellwether for the fall congressional elections? And what about Iraq? The White House says it's not as bad as critics are saying, but even some of the president's supporters are beginning to wonder. What does Lieberman believe? Jim VandeHei of The Washington Post will join in the questioning. And I'll have a final word on the irony age. But first, Senator Joe Lieberman on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now from CBS News in Washington, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. With us now, Senator Joe Lieberman. And I guess this is an exclusive interview.

Senator JOSEPH LIEBERMAN (Democrat, Connecticut; Running as an Independent Candidate): It is.

SCHIEFFER: I don't know of anybody else you're talking to for the next half-hour or so, anyway. Thank you for coming--for coming this morning.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Just the two of you. Thank you, Bob. Good to be back.

SCHIEFFER: And Jim VandeHei, the national political reporter for The Washington Post, is here.

Jim, glad to have you.

Mr. JIM VANDEHEI (National Political Reporter, The Washington Post): Good to be here.

SCHIEFFER: Let's get right to Iraq. Obviously, in the Democratic primary, people thought you were too supportive of the war in Iraq. All kinds of calculations, assessments of what's happening there. Some say we're already in a civil war there. How would you describe the situation in Iraq right now, Senator Lieberman?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Yeah. I would say that the last six months have been bad, a setback. And I'm talking mostly about the sectarian violence. I understand that it was started or inflamed by the Zarqawi al-Qaeda group blowing up the holy Shia mosque in Samarra that set off a series of attacks and counterattacks. But the sectarian violence is a definite setback to our hopes and the hopes of a majority of Iraqis to build a new and free and independent Iraq. And another setback is that the Iraqi security forces that we have been working very hard to train have clearly not been able to contain that violence--that sectarian violence. And we've got to urgently deal with that.

I must say in the primary as I look back to it, I feel that I allowed my opponent to distort my position on Iraq.

SCHIEFFER: What do you mean by that?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Well, what I mean is he, he made me into a cheerleader for George Bush and everything that's happened. And the record shows that while I believe that we did the right thing in overthrowing Saddam Hussein, I've been very critical over the years, particularly in 2003 and 2004, about the failure to send enough American troops to secure the country, about the absence of adequate plans and preparation to deal with post-Saddam Iraq. And I, even on this show in October of 2003, about three years ago, said that we needed a new secretary of defense, that things had gone so badly after Saddam was overthrown that we would benefit from new civilian leadership that the military--our uniformed military had confidence in. So we've--that was a distortion.

What we really have to talk about, every campaign is about the future. And part of this campaign is not just about how we fix our health care system, how we get energy prices down, how we make our public schools the best in the world, how we stop global warming, it's about how we end our involvement in Iraq successfully. Because I've supported the war, I don't think there's anybody who wants more to end it than I do. But...

SCHIEFFER: Are you now saying it's time to start drawing down the troops there, Senator?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: No, and that's absolutely the point I'm making.

SCHIEFFER: OK.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: And this is the choice the voters of Connecticut have and that people around America have. As bad as things are now, and they've gotten worse in the last six months, it would be a disaster if America set a deadline and said we're getting all of our troops out by a given date. That's the position that Ned Lamont has taken. That's the position that was introduced in the Senate, got only 13 votes. So--and the reason is that people know if we set a deadline, the sectarian violence would not go down, it would go up. It--that there would be ready...

SCHIEFFER: But it's not going down now.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Well, we have to look at different things to do to help it go down.

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sen. LIEBERMAN: And most of all, we have to demand that the Iraqi government do a better job--this new unity government--a better job at containing the sectarian violence.

SCHIEFFER: I don't--let me just ask you one more question.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Please.

SCHIEFFER: Then what do we do? I mean, do you say that the United States should just stay there indefinitely?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: No, no. And I've said that that's another distortion that my opponent managed to convince too many people in the Connecticut Democratic Party about. I've never been for an indefinite, unconditional deployment of American troops. The fact is that the sooner that the Iraqis can take over their own--control of their own destiny, the better it will be for them and for us.

But here's the point: if we leave precipitously, if we say we're going on X day, everybody's getting out, as bad as things are, they will get worse. There will be an all-out civil war in Iraq, Iran will surge in to control large parts of that country, there'll be a wider, regional war, and al-Qaeda and similar radical Islamist terrorists, will use Iraq as a safe haven from which to attack us and others.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: We--we've got to avoid that and I'm happy to talk about some of the things I think we need to do there.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, let's go to Jim.

Mr. JIM VANDEHEI (National Political Reporter, The Washington Post): A lot of the military commanders, even the Bush administration, are now saying that Iraq is very near to being in a full-blown civil war. My question to you would be, Senator Warner, who's the chairman of the Armed Services Committee, said that if that is in fact the case, that Congress should perhaps have to re-authorize this because the American people did not sign up for refereeing a civil war. A, should the Congress do that? And is that something you would support?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Well, look, what's happening now, this is all a question of words. I don't think it's an all-out civil war because there remains a national unity government and a--and a military which is not divided according to Shia, Sunni, Kurd. But the violence there is terrible now, the sectarian violence. And what I'm saying is, we have to do everything we possibly can to avoid an all-out civil war. I'm saying that the position that my opponent and others take to set a deadline by which we will get out is the surest way to get to a civil war, which would be dangerous for our troops, a disaster for Iraq, the Middle East, and for the United States of America.

So, look, if it gets--what I'm saying is, we've got to do everything we can to avoid that. And part of the reason is that Iraq has now become a battlefield, a major battlefield, in the larger war we are engaged with with the Islamic

terrorists who attacked us on 9/11. The way we end this will have a big effect on the security of our country and the prospects for success of the United States of America--and our allies around the world--in this war against terrorism. Obviously, if the place collapses and there is an all-out civil war, then we've got to be realists and the president and Congress have to counsel together about how we should conduct ourselves and whether it's time to pull our troops out.

SCHIEFFER: Well, if that happens--getting back to the question that Jim asked--if that happened, would you want another vote in the Congress?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Yeah, and I think--I think that there'd be bipartisan interest in doing it. But look, let me state it again: We have to do everything we possibly can, we have to demand everything we possibly can of the Iraqis. We have to try--I saw a suggestion recently, not a bad one, that the United States and our allies the Brits, particularly, ought to try to convene an international crisis conference on Iraq, bringing in the Europeans and particularly the other Arab countries who are now worrying that if Iraq collapses and falls into civil war that Iran will surge in and dominate and claim a victory. I think it's worth trying that again and bringing the various parties in Iraq to that international conference.

Mr. VANDEHEI: Aren't you--aren't you on the wrong side of this, though, politically? Wasn't that the message at the Democratic primary and the polls that we're seeing? It seems like the American people, they do want something else. They don't just want international conferences. They want a plan to get out of there and get out of there within the next year or so.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Jim...

Mr. VANDEHEI: At what point is there--is there enough public pressure, that you see that 70 percent of Americans want that, that you and others start to respond to that?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Yeah. Jim, I took an oath when I began my service as a United States senator. I put one hand on the Bible and the other hand in the air. My oath, as I interpreted it, was to carry out my constitutional responsibility to do what was best for my state and my country. You don't do that by taking polls. I understand the unpopularity of the war. I understand the frustration of the American people as they watch the deaths on TV every night. I, of course, share that frustration. In some ways I feel it even more deeply than most because I have supported this war. That's why I would--I would like to see us out of there as soon as possible.

But I have a responsibility to take a view beyond today's polls and think about the security of my children and grandchildren and your children and grandchildren, everybody's grandchildren and grandchild--children and grandchildren. And the fact is, if we just pick up and leave Iraq it will be a disaster that we will pay for for a generation, and I don't want to do that.

SCHIEFFER: Are--were you--were you satisfied--are you comfortable when you

basically get the endorsement of the vice president? Vice President Cheney?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Well, it wasn't an endorsement. I haven't sought his endorsement and I don't expect that he commented on his interpretation of what happened in the primary in Connecticut. I got to tell you, Bob, that a lot of national political ears on both parties have been spinning the results of the primary of a week and a half ago. That's their business, it's not mine. I'm not going to let myself and my campaign become anybody's national political football. This is a question before the voters of Connecticut, and I've decided to continue this campaign because I feel so deeply that I can do a better job for my state and country than either of my opponents and I want all the voters to decide that, not just the 15 percent who participated in the Democratic primary. And I feel that way because of my experience...

SCHIEFFER: Well...

Sen. LIEBERMAN: ...my seniority and most of all that I can work across partisan lines to get things done. I am as fed up as I think most of the American people are with the partisanship and polarization in Washington. That means we don't solve the people's problems. If you want another partisan polarizer vote for Ned Lamont.

SCHIEFFER: Well, I mean the fact is...

Sen. LIEBERMAN: If you want somebody that can get something done, vote for me.

SCHIEFFER: ...the polls now show that you not only are leading in the race up there now, but that you have a sizable lead. But are you a de facto Republican as Ned Lamont said that you were?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Well, obviously not. Again, my opponent's new at politics but he's getting pretty good at the old-style Washington smear partisan political game. I'm a Democrat.

SCHIEFFER: Well, John Kerry also seems to suggest that. What did he say?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: With all--with...

SCHIEFFER: He said, "What's worse than starling is that Connecticut's Joe Lieberman is now echoing the Republican's intolerable rhetoric, attacking the Democrats."

Sen. LIEBERMAN: With all--with all respect to John Kerry, an old friend, that's just plain politics by somebody who has ambitions of his own. I am a Democrat. Look at my voting record. I voted 90 percent of the time with the majority of Democrats in the United States Senate. But when I disagree I'm going to have the courage of my convictions to say so. And most important of all, I came to Washington to solve problems, not to play partisan politics. We got a lot of problems. Health care system broken, people paying too much money for gasoline and home heating oil, public schools not what they ought to

be, global warming threatening, fiscal deficits. The only way we're going to solve those problems is by working across party lines, and that's what I want to do.

Mr. VANDEHEI: What about the--what about this argument that--from Democrats, when I talk to senators what really ticks them off is that they feel like you are saying things that help Republicans. When you say that a lot of Democrats are outside the mainstream of America, or when you say the people who want time tables are only making America less secure. They're saying well now Republicans just point to you and say, 'Look, you're the Democrat who is saying precisely what we're saying.' Are you at all worried that you're going to undermine your party's chances of winning back the House and Senate because of your rhetoric to beat Lamont?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: No, I'm not. I'm worried that my party may become what we accuse the Republicans of, a kind of litmus test party. 'If you don't agree with us 100 percent of the time, you don't agree with us.' I'm devoted to the Democratic Party. But I...

Mr. VANDEHEI: You are a litmus test party, right? I mean...

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Well, we...

Mr. VANDEHEI: ...you have to be at a certain place on abortion, you have to be at a certain place on the war.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: ...we can't be across the board like that. We have--the two great American political parties have done their best when they've accepted diversity. Our party at its best--we have a real chance to win a majority in Congress this year and elect a president in '08. But we're not going to do it if we--if we start playing those games of 'You've got to agree with me 100 percent or you don't agree with me at all.'

I represent a tradition in the Democratic Party which is social progress here at home and strength in foreign and defense policy. I think I--my party gains by having people like me in it. I'm a committed Democrat and I'm going to stay that way.

Mr. VANDEHEI: But you know what's going to happen. You know how it's going to play out, that there's going to be so much pressure from liberal activists on your fellow Democratic senators that come out and be more sharply critical of you. Is there a point where they push so far that you say, 'You know what? I'm just going to be an independent.'

Sen. LIEBERMAN: No.

Mr. VANDEHEI: Or, 'You know what? I'm in caucus with Republicans.'

Sen. LIEBERMAN: No, I've set my position. I'm going to caucus with the Democratic Party, but I'm going to do what I've done for 18 years and which I believe the Senate, the Congress and America needs, which is to reach across

party lines to get things done. I've done that over and over again with John McCain, with Susan Collins to benefit our national security, our homeland security. I did it in the first Bush administration with that president's leaders on the environment to adopt the amendments to the Clean Air Act. This is the only way we will solve America's problems and rebuild America's greatness. And incidentally, it's the only way we're going to win the war against radical jihadist terrorism which threatens the security of every American everyday.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let me ask you a little bit about that. You're talking about how you disagree with Democrats, but you're a--but you're a Democrat. Where do you disagree with President Bush on how the war is being prosecuted?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: I hope you have the time. Look, I supported--you know, let me go back a bit. I actually joined with John McCain and Bob Kerry and introduced the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998, and in that act we said it's time to change the regime in Baghdad. Saddam Hussein is a ticking time-bomb and we have to get rid of him. So I believed it was right to overthrow Saddam. After that, I'll begin to tick it off. We should've--John McCain and I argued right then in '03. We should have--we should have sent more troops into Iraq to secure the country. We had a naive vision that the Iraqis were going to embrace us and then go on and live happily ever after. We weren't prepared.

SCHIEFFER: OK. We have one minute left.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: And I said...

SCHIEFFER: Tell us what you would do right now that is different than what the president is proposing.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Yeah. I think there's--three years ago in October on this show you asked me and I said that I believe that it was time for new leadership at the Pentagon. I think it's still time for new leadership at the Pentagon. With all respect to Don Rumsfeld, who has done a grueling job for six years, we would benefit from new leadership to work with our military in Iraq. We also have to put severe pressure on the Iraqis to contain the sectarian violence that is there and stand up their ministries of defense and interior security. And then we've got to get the other Arab countries and hopefully some of the Europeans in with us to help to reconstruct Iraq.

There is still hope in Iraq, and so long as there is, we cannot just pick up and, and walk away and leave them to the sure disaster that would follow and that would compromise our security in the war against terrorism.

SCHIEFFER: All right. All right.

Mr. VANDEHEI: In five or 10 years, that's fine?

Sen. LIEBERMAN: I don't believe it will take five or 10 years.

SCHIEFFER: OK. I'm sorry. We have to let it go there. Thank you very much.

Sen. LIEBERMAN: Thank you, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: OK. See you again.

We'll be back in a moment to talk about this a little bit.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And back now for a little post-game analysis with Jim VandeHei of The Washington Post.

Jim, you've been out covering politics intensely, including this race and the other races around the country. What did you make of what Senator Lieberman said today?

Mr. VANDEHEI: I think he's clearly trying to play up that he is, in fact, a Bush critic. He knows, he's reading the same polls that we're reading. I mean, the Iraq war is very unpopular, and not just in Connecticut, but everywhere. And it's the dominant issue in almost every campaign I go to. Even if candidates are talking about it, it's what's coloring people's perceptions of this election and of the candidates. And people are in a sour mood, I think for a good reason--or the main reason would be because of Iraq. They just feel so uncertain about its outcome. They see the casualty rates going up. They see every single day in the newspaper that people are dying and getting injured, and they don't see any hope for an end in sight.

SCHIEFFER: Why do you think then he's now up in the polls when he got beat in the primary by someone who accused him of being too much for the war?

Mr. VANDEHEI: Ironically, Republicans. I mean, you look at that poll and he's getting 75 percent of Republicans in Connecticut are supporting him. Ned Lamont is running ahead of the Republican candidate in Connecticut, and he also is popular with Independents and he's only getting about 33 percent of the Democratic support right now. But he's been in the Senate for a long time, done a lot for Connecticut, has high name recognition, that helps Lieberman. And I think that, you know, that poll--I think he was clearly happy that he was up this much after what he thought he would see would be a big Ned Lamont bounce because he got so much national recognition.

SCHIEFFER: What do you--what do--what is your sense of it now, as you've gone around the country covering these various races? Is Iraq going to be the deciding factor, and how much of a factor? For example, do you think that the Republicans might, in fact, lose the House this time or are they going to hold on?

Mr. VANDEHEI: Well, they certainly could. I mean, it's amazing. If you look at all the metrics of election--whether you're looking at polls, fund-raising, mood--things are really bad for Republicans. And what worries them most is that the polls have been pretty static in that people are unhappy with President Bush, about 35 percent are favorable. Even fewer people are

happy with the Republican Congress. And you take those together and you see that it hasn't moved; it's been that way all summer, and even this recent foiled plot in London did very little to move the numbers. So that tells me that people's minds are pretty locked in, that they're unhappy and they want change.

But as you and I have talked about before, the system is rigged, in some ways, to make sure incumbents win. I mean, House seats have been gerrymandered over the years to make it virtually impossible. Your viewers are probably sitting there thinking, 'Competitive House race?' Ninety percent of Americans don't have a competitive House race. There's only about 35 seats that are truly in play, which makes it harder for Democrats to make those gains. But certainly, there's a lot of indicators that suggest things are headed in a bad direction for Republicans. The question is, are those structural advantages enough to fend it off?

SCHIEFFER: Do you think there's any chance that the Senate might change hands? That Democrats might take control there?

Mr. VANDEHEI: Much more difficult. I mean, you're looking at 55/45 right now for the Republican advantage, so they have to pick up six seats. You can sketch out a scenario where there's six incumbents that they can knock off, but it's very difficult because in so many areas, Republicans are well-funded, they're running in states that tend to move Republican, anyways. But if you look at, you know, places like Rhode Island, Connecticut, Ohio, Missouri, those states truly could, you know, change. They could flip hands, the Democrats could pick them up, and if there is a national wave--and there very often are not national waves in an election; usually they're about local issues. But this year, if people are so unhappy that they're saying, you know, 'Let's throw the bums out,' that would work against, obviously, against Republicans, and then maybe some of these seats that don't look like they're so much in play become in play and then they have that possibility.'

SCHIEFFER: What state would you guess would be the place where you might see the most change?

Mr. VANDEHEI: I would keep an eye on Ohio. I mean, this is the big race, obviously, in 2004. It's what put Bush over the top. I just got back from there. It's a bad place to be a Republican right now. I mean, they have their own unique issue such as scandals at the state level. But people are very unhappy. The Iraq war tends to be a little bit bigger issue there; I think they have the fifth-highest casualty rate so far in Iraq. A year ago, it was Brook Park, where they lost all of those soldiers in one small community. Big national story.

You know, in these states where you have--like Ohio--where you have a big big manufacturing sector that's still making that transition into the 21st-century economy, things tend not to be as good economically, and that factors in. And you have someone like Mike DeWine, who in a normal year would not be in any trouble, in big trouble. You have someone like Deborah Pryce, the number four Republican in the House, who hasn't had a tough race in 14 years, now she

does. She's in big trouble.

SCHIEFFER: OK. We'll keep our eye on Ohio. Thank you very much, Jim. Great to have you.

Mr. VANDEHEI: Thank you, Bob.

SCHIEFFER: I'll be back with a final word in just a second.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, it is getting hard to miss the irony. Some guy who thinks he's Peter Pan gets arrested in Thailand and it looks like the JonBenet Ramsey case has finally been solved. Then the Peter Pan guy confesses and people say the case falls apart. Now that is a first: A suspect confesses and seems to help rather than hurt himself. It makes you wonder if the courts should stop making cops warn suspects that anything they say may be held against them. In this case, it seems clear it didn't hurt him.

In this summer of great irony, maybe we shouldn't have been surprised. Take the war in Lebanon. The Lebanese Hezbollah group started a war that left most of its country in ruins, then declared victory and now seems to be winning the hearts and minds of the homeless by handing out money--in some cases, US greenback dollars--to rebuild the bombed-out houses.

I remember the time during Vietnam when US forces leveled a village and an American officer said, 'We had to destroy the village to save it.' In Lebanon, that strategy actually seems to have worked, at least on many of the people there.

The Middle East, of course, is a poor example because nothing there ever comes out quite the way we expect, but this summer, right or wrong, everything seems to be coming out backwards. I mean, put aside the arguments about who the best candidate is and just consider this: How do you become a real favorite to win re-election to the Senate from Connecticut? This summer, the answer seems to be 'Lose your party primary.' This is some summer.

That's it for us. We'll see you next week right here on FACE THE NATION.