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Why pretend that Hillary Clinton is progressive?

The scheduled speech by Sen. Hillary Clinton at the "Take Back America 2006" conference in Washington on June 13 is likely to intensify discussion about her relationship with the progressive grassroots of the Democratic Party.

Many weeks ago the conference sponsor, the Campaign for America's Future, sent out an email telling prospective attendees: "As in years past, we expect America's most prominent progressive leaders to attend and address the conference. Invited speakers include..." On the list was Hillary Clinton.

In response, I wrote to Campaign for America's Future co-director Roger Hickey and asked what Clinton's name was doing on a list of "progressive leaders." He responded by saying that "I don't think of ALL of our speakers as 'America's most prominent progressive leaders.' In fact, I have been quoted saying very critical things about Hillary – in the Washington Post and elsewhere. We do, however, want to ask possible presidential candidates to attempt publicly to justify their candidacy to the progressive activists."

Hickey also commented that "some people do consider Hillary progressive."

But the people who "do consider Hillary progressive" could mostly be divided into two categories – those who are Fox-News-attuned enough to believe any non-Republican is a far leftist, and those who are left-leaning but don't realize how viciously opportunistic Sen. Clinton has been. Today, in keeping with her political character, she welcomes the fund-raising support of reactionary media mogul Rupert Murdoch.

Unfortunately, the kind of confusion that sees Hillary Clinton as progressive is apt to get a boost from her appearance at a conference with avowedly progressive sponsorship – particularly because the person in the best position to dispel such confusion is not on the program. The "Take Back America" schedule set aside half an hour for a speech from Clinton but not a minute for any words from Jonathan Tasini, the longtime union activist who's running – on an antiwar and all-around progressive platform – against Clinton in this year's Democratic primary for senator from New York.

It's sad to see that the progressive conference has excluded from the podium the vigorous primary challenger Tasini while featuring a speaker who has stood against the pro-

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gressive agenda consistently for more than a decade on issues ranging from NAFTA to the invasion and occupation of Iraq.

Tasini points out that Hillary Clinton remains for the war in Iraq, for so-called "free trade" agreements and for the death penalty. She supported the notorious 2001 bankruptcy bill, "has never been for single-payer health insurance" and has worked hard to undermine a host of other progressive positions.

In the interests of truth-in-labeling, shouldn't Hillary Clinton be described as anti-progressive?

Norman Solomon's book "War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death" is being published this month in paperback. For information, go to: www.warmadeeasy.com