Gore Headlines Liberal Confab

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The Recorder

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By Justin Scheck
RECORDER STAFF WRITER

Whether he’s painted as the occupant of moral high ground (if not the White House), the victim of conservative ideologues on the U.S. Supreme Court or someone who just barely slipped over the line between success and abject failure, Al Gore is a loaded figure for the left.

So it was with eager anticipation that a group of San Francisco attorneys and law students Friday waited for him to arrive at Golden Gate University.

The organization — which started four years ago largely to counteract the Federalist Society — has been trying hard to build up its membership base almost since the Gore presidency evaporated. In fact, its aim is largely to address problems on the left that many fault for Gore’s presidential loss.

“The Bush v. Gore case, no question, mobilized people,” said ACS Executive Director Lisa Brown, who was Gore’s lawyer during part of his vice presidency.

“But what we’re trying to get at is bigger than that, to help the progressives on the legal perspective of what do we stand for,” she added.

Answers to that question were bandied about by many in the VIP room, where lawyers, judges and the like waited for Gore to arrive.

As they conversed, the Federalist Society — and its effectiveness — was an oft-mentioned subject.

“They got a 20-year head start,” said Elizabeth Cabraser, as serene in the waiting room as she was in front of the filled auditorium, when she introduced Brown, who introduced Gore. The Lieff, Cabraser, Heimann & Bernstein partner said that whereas liberal baby boomers grew complacent in the 1980s and ’90s, the right mobilized and fought hard to gain influence. “They don’t apologize,” she said. “But on the left, we agonize.”

Gore’s police-flanked arrival sent a hush through the VIP room, as the former vice president made a diligent handshaking circuit, being sure to tightly grip — and make requisite eye contact — with every lawyer, reporter and bartender in the room.

Eventually everyone followed him into the lecture hall, where he began his speech — which focused on wartime infringements on civil liberties — with a now-familiar refrain.

“I am Al Gore,” he said. “I used to be the next president of the United States.”

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