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Orcinus on the Rural Strategy

Kevin Carson

January 12, 2005

Orcinus elaborates further on his proposed rural strategy.

There are similar issues that can be used to dispel the conservative stranglehold on rural political life: the demise of the family farm; corporate timber giants' job-reducing measures and resource mismanagement; the gutting of the rural infrastructure; destruction of hunting and fishing habitat. And that's just for starters. For nearly every rural locale, there is a menu of opportunities.

It is important to remember that this has to be done by candidates who can demonstrate they share rural dwellers' real values: hard work, honesty, decency, forthrightness, integrity. They also have to be genuine; a few years ago, Idaho Democrats ran as their candidate for the U.S. Senate a man from the East Coast who claimed residence in Sun Valley. Nice fellow, and an avid fly fisherman, but he wasn't from Idaho and gave little sign he had any more than a

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peripheral connection to the people who live there. He got creamed, of course; but even worse, he underscored the perception in the state of Democrats as the party of urban elites.

Red Staters are a wide-open field for propaganda, if we were smart about it. They were just as socially conservative, just as prone to Bible-thumping and Jesus-shouting a hundred years ago—but then they were backing the People’s Party, the Socialist Party, the Non-Partisan League, the Farmer-Labor Party, the cooperative movement, etc., etc. And they still have a populist element in their core values that could be directed against corporate America. The problem is that right now Rove & Co. are skilfully manipulating their populist values and symbols and directing their resentments against fake “elites” like trial lawyers.

These people, I repeat, are a field white unto harvest for genuine anti-corporate and anti-government populism. They need to be shown how illegitimate the present economic system of crony capitalism and corporate welfare is ACCORDING TO THEIR OWN VALUE SYSTEM. They need to be shown, in vivid detail, how Bush and Rove appeal to their “aw, shucks” Middle American values of rugged individualism, while in practice enriching billionaires at taxpayer expense. They need to be shown the extent to which the billionaires get their money by socializing the costs and risks of doing business, and sucking off the government tit.

In other words, we need to demonize the phony populists of the GOP in terms of their own rhetoric.

The Democratic Freedom blog (an organ of the more-or-less Geolibertarian Democratic Freedom Caucus) often has good ideas for people oriented toward such a strategy. Another good starting place for such an approach is the work of Bill Kauffman.