

GOP Jackals Descend on the South

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"Vulnerability." To civilized people that term conjures up feelings of nurturing and compassion. Selflessness and devotion. The good in the Samaritan who stopped to help the man left for dead by the bandits.

But apparently to the GOP, at least to its leaders, the term "vulnerability" is a Pavlovian signal to drool at the prospect of a weakness to be exploited. Like jackals descending upon a wounded wildebeest, the Right is poised to ravage the Gulf Coast, as savagely as did the merciless Katrina, before they attack the economy as a whole.

Rapacious greed knows no conscience.

[Just consider the "help" that the GOP is offering the reconstruction efforts.](#)

The administration has suspended the Davis-Bacon rule, thus allowing federal contractors to pay workers less than the prevailing wage, while not requiring the savings to be passed on to the taxpayers—[not satisfied just with profits from no-bid contracts](#), the Halliburtons of this country stand to make untold billions on years of reconstruction ... not even counting the huge tax breaks they will receive, as will their multi-

million-dollar executives, from the tax cuts Bush refuses to rescind, and as will the dynasties of their heirs, from the estate tax the Congress intends to eliminate.

The administration has suspended affirmative action requirements for first-time federal contractors in the reconstruction zone—regulations that help minorities, women, veterans, and the disabled—despite the president's prime-time assurance that he would do everything in his power to remedy racism and discrimination, past, present, and future, as even he admitted exacerbated the disaster.

The administration has suspended the requirement that employers hire only documented workers. The American victims displaced from their jobs and their homes by Katrina are now being displaced from the reconstruction efforts by big businesses' hiring undocumented workers laboring for little and living in trailers without running water and with no real power ... and not just electrical hook-ups, my friends.

I swear if they thought they could get away with it, the administration would repeal the 13th

Amendment and bring back slavery—the ultimate "ownership society."

The administration is suspending rules right and left to protect the environment—the very environment whose rape left the city of New Orleans so vulnerable to destruction, the wetlands that act as barrier to storm surge but a shadow of their former, natural self.

The administration is funneling public school money into private school vouchers (as they've been trying to do for years), while hiding behind children and parents displaced and traumatized by the storm.

[And others on the Right are snarling for even more vicious attacks on our systems of social justice, the very conscience of our nation.](#)

The Cato Institute is clamoring again for privatizing Social Security, because "asset accumulation plays a vital role in escaping poverty." As if "every man for himself" had not been discredited by the deaths of the masses stranded in the sewage.

Newt Gingrich calls for more cuts in federal taxes—driving us deeper in debt, as to banks overseas, and requiring more cuts in programs helping the poor—as well as for wholesale cuts in "red tape" for big business—read, fewer protections for workers, consumers, and the environment.

The *Wall Street Journal* calls not only for big tax cuts for big business but also for a flat tax on personal income—much more of a benefit for

those at the top than for those at the bottom.

"Why not allow the Gulf [Coast] to operate as a laboratory for a flat tax," asks the *WSJ*. Why?!

Because those at the top have much more than they need, while those at the bottom can barely survive!

Republican Senators James Inhofe, of Oklahoma, and David Vitter, of Louisiana, are pushing to allow the administration to suspend any environmental law for up to a year and a half; and Inhofe goes further, wanting to prohibit any citizens from filing any lawsuits against federal contractors who despoil the environment—as if it is worthless, as if we are not living within the environment, as if we were gods.

And never to be outdone, the Heritage Foundation not only calls for eliminating all capital gains taxes in the region—as if the prospect of hundreds of billions of dollars in federal contracts, and who knows how much more money from the private sector, weren't incentive enough to draw business to the largest construction project in the history of the nation—they also want the infrastructure—the very roads, rail lines, and other lifelines of civilization—turned over to private companies "under contract" with the government, the same government that the Right wants to never interfere with business.

The jackals feast on the guts of the beast. And we are promised by the rabid Right that this is only a preview of what is in store for the rest of the country.

So what if anything do we on the Left offer as alternatives? Contrary to all-too-fashionable criticism, [we progressives do indeed have ideas—very compassionate, very practical solutions—which put the needs of the many ahead of the profiteering of the few.](#)

Senator Ted Kennedy is creating a blueprint for a Gulf Coast Redevelopment Authority, modeled after FDR's Tennessee Valley Authority, which successfully revived that then-flood-plagued region.

Senator John Edwards is pushing for another New Deal-inspired program, a new Works Progress Administration, called the New America Initiative, which would take displaced Americans and put them back to work rebuilding their own communities—a far cry from the administration's reliance on workers from outside of the country.

The Campaign for America's Future—in addition to pushing for repeal of the bankruptcy bill, to help ruined families—is calling for re-creating yet another New Deal success, a new Civilian Conservation Corps, to put displaced workers back to work restoring—not exploiting—the environment, such as the wetlands that serve as natural protections against hurricanes.

Sometimes those in the Middle ask if there is any difference between those on the Right and those on the Left.

While everyday people, on the Left and the Right, have contributed record amounts to help the victims in the South, this catastrophe has

brought the positions of the leaders on the Right and the Left into much sharper focus.

They are as different as greed and compassion.