

DAILY KOS

Mon Oct 03, 2011 at 06:58 PM PDT

[You Want Cuts? We'll Give Ya Cuts!](#)

by [PoliticallyNonEuclidean](#)

When the chorus of parrots on the right demands cuts in government programs with idiotic but effective repetition, the left and center have given a response which can most charitably be called incoherent. This is understandable, since trying to rebut a simplistic argument with a nuanced strategy is never easy; many people instinctively respond to the passion of the former and find the latter to be bloodless, geeky, wonky, or inhuman.

What would be much more effective is to find a few excellent talking points that can subvert their rhetoric. For a start, every time anyone starts talking about the need for budget cuts, immediately agree - starting with cotton, sugar, and subsidies. These are SOCIALISM! at their worst, government programs that benefit very few people and make prices higher for everyone else. They are administered by an entrenched bureaucracy (and who likes those?), and are keeping large corporate agribusiness from enjoying the many benefits of capitalist competition!

(More below the artistic squiggle thingie)

(oh, by the way, those subsidies also overwhelmingly benefit republican districts and donors, but it's probably not worth mentioning that, because this really is about vanquishing SOCIALISM!, of course. we would never, ever let mere politics affect our judgment, would we? nope, me either, so that makes both of us.)

So how much are these subsidies? Well, the total is 30 Billion, according to this article from the Environmental Working Group:

<http://www.ewg.org/...>

cotton is between 2 and 4 Billion per year, according to this article:

<http://www.npr.org/...>

Somewhere around 2 Billion is for sugar subsidies, according to the Cato Institute (and for more background, read this article).

<http://www.nhpr.org/...>

The rest is mostly for corn and soybeans, both of which are headed for stratospheric prices now - but this isn't just about now. Even if the total was just a measly Billion (hardly worth talking about by Washington standards), it is still money wasted to pay to overproduce crops, which is the essence of SOCIALISM! We could mention something about how these subsidies encourage wasteful overfertilization and

discourage crop rotation that would naturally renew the land, but that would sound too, y'know, hippieish.

While we're at it on the subsidy thing, let's keep going. I rarely agree with anything on Fox "news", but John Stossel is right that subsidizing alpaca and llama farming is a complete waste of money. You don't have to watch him or give him a click - look at this article:

<http://news.medill.northwestern.edu/...>

An inedible animal that gives no drinkable milk and is raised only for fleece gets government money, while kids who need dentistry don't? Sounds like SOCIALISM! to me.

We can keep going - those ten military bases in Texas look like a juicy place to save a few billion. Those programs by which the government subsidizes roads so oil exploration and mining can take place - cut 'em! Roads to our rural communities are decaying, but we're building roads so companies can extract minerals and split? If the mine is profitable, they can build and maintain their own roads to get to it. Anything else is SOCIALISM! Enact a law that cattle ranching leases on public land can never be sold for less than the cost of government services and road maintenance to that land plus 10% - most ranch leases now are at a loss, and subsidizing loss-making businesses is SOCIALISM!

So when the wingers start raving about cutting back the government, agree with them - and hammer the cuts that hit their constituencies. Make them defend corporate socialism (and no caps there because it isn't a scare word, it's the way things are right now and they must be forced to recognize it.) Turn the conversation around by agreeing with them about needing to cut spending on wasteful programs and getting just as passionate about it - but have the truth and the numbers on your side. When they demand to cut women's healthcare, point out how much more could be saved by cutting spending for subsidies to the constituencies that dump money into Republican coffers. Point out how the land could be productively used to increase food security here instead of supporting a glut of cotton or a herd of cute Andean camelopards.

And once in a while you will discover that some of them agree with you, because some of them actually mean what they say but have not thought it through. In that case there is the possibility for a learning experience, even a meeting of minds. If we can peel off a few of the sensible ones, help make them a factor against the corruption and waste inside their own party, it would be a service to the country and society. We need to hone that message because we can win that argument, but only if we make it in the first place.