



## Somebody Hit Bill Keller's Knee with a Hammer

By: Charles P. Pierce – May 14, 2013

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I swear, it's an autonomic reflex at this point.

We're cruising through Bill Keller's altogether decent column about the bogus Heritage Foundation study on the economic effects of immigration titled, we believe, "Brown People Are Stealing Your Money, AIEEEEE!!!! Re-Elect Steve King." Or something like that. OK, we think, Keller's a little nicer on Heritage than we would have been. (It's always been a propaganda shop, and not a legitimate think tank. That's how Robert Rector has stayed employed. See also, "Powell memo.") But then we get to this thing.

First, this is an unusually stark sign of the transformation of Washington's think tank culture into a more partisan archipelago of propaganda factories. In recent years, according to James McGann, director of the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, think tanks on both the right and the left have set up explicit lobbying arms, anointed leaders known not for academic credibility but for partisan ferocity, and picked their fights at least in part to help drive their fund-raising. Last year the right-wing billionaire brothers Charles and David Koch exercised their megadonors' droit du seigneur over the libertarian Cato Institute, ousting the longtime president. The announcement in December that Senator Jim DeMint, a Tea Party darling, would become Heritage's new president was not the beginning of a transformation, but its logical culmination. DeMint was enthusiastically front and center last week in the unveiling of the Heritage immigration report, even as scholars in his employ were telling friends they found the study embarrassing. I'm told the 2007 attack on immigration reform was gangbusters as a fund-raising message. Some speculate that this time around the issue might also make a nice platform for DeMint's possible presidential ambitions.

So Keller asserts that, "on both the right and the left," think-tanks have been turned into ideological weapons, and he then proceeds to offer two examples from the right, and none from "the left." (McGann's work, to say the least, is controversial.) But Both Sides Do It, of course. Yeesh.