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## Smear Fail!

Thursday, January 21st, 2010

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee put out a hilarious press release slagging a GOP congressional candidate for his ties to the “right wing extremist group,” the “CATO” [sic] Institute.

Hmm. By my reckoning, Cato’s to the left of Obama on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, all issues related to the drug war, indefinite detention, state secrets, government transparency, extraordinary rendition, “enhanced interrogation,” and government surveillance. Cato has also filed pro-defense amicus briefs on the opposite side of the Obama administration on cases ranging from the civil commitment of would-be sex offenders, to suing prosecutors who frame innocent people, to compensating attorneys who win civil rights lawsuits against the government, to ensuring property owners who lose their property in forfeiture cases get their day in court in a timely fashion. Cato was also a hell of a lot more active about holding the prior administration’s feet to the fire for its abuse of the Constitution than the spineless Democrats were.

If Cato is extreme right wing, where does that put Obama and the Democratic leadership?

I’m not even sure the issue the DCCC is complaining about here—free trade—has an easily demarcated left-right breakdown. I’m also not sure how it’s “right-wing” to advocate unilaterally bringing down trade barriers to allow mutual exchange of labor and goods with the people of other countries. You could (incorrectly) argue that it’s unwise, but there’s nothing necessarily right-wing about it. Even if the DCCC is claiming Cato is right-wing corporatist (as opposed to right-wing populist), that doesn’t really hold water either, given that the organization comes down on the opposite side of Obama and most congressional Democrats on corporate farm subsidies, R&D boondoggles, and the bailouts. Hell, Cato wants to eliminate the Department of Commerce! That’s extreme (and correct, IMHO), but it’s hardly right-wing.

But what do I know? In lefty land, I’m just a Republican who does drugs.

(Disclosure: I should have added when I put up this post that I worked for Cato for five years, and now have an unpaid Media Fellow position with the organization.)

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This entry was posted on Thursday, January 21st, 2010 at 11:02 am by Radley Balko and is filed under Uncategorized. You can follow any responses to this entry through the RSS 2.0 feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.

## 23 Responses to “Smear Fail!”

#1 | SES | January 21st, 2010 at 11:35 am


You know, Radley, occasionally I get to thinking that there can be such a think as a rational debate between reasonable people of differing values and



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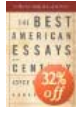


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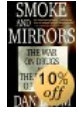
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hence, different political beliefs. I think that, you know, sometimes when one gets past the demagoguery and team hatred, it might be possible for us to discuss our differences in a reasoned way and come to some kind of measured, respectful accommodation of differences.

Then you go lifting that rock by reminding us what kind of stomach-churning idiocy goes on at sites like “Sadly, No! (clue what we’re talking about)” and it goes to remind me that no, reasonable dialogue really isn’t possible with most people. And while the conservatives may have insufferable cretins like Hannity and Limbaugh on the airwaves, the left is far from exempt from rallying around know-nothing blowhards. Only with added smugness.

In as much, there cant’ really *be* a debate, sometimes, because that’s not what these people want. No, they just want to villainize and engage in some good-old-fashioned team hatred.

In as much, sometimes schadenfreude is about the only joy I get out of politics as a libertarian.

+14

#2 | [MacGregory](#) | January 21st, 2010 at 11:47 am

Shit then, guess I’m gonna have to form a 4th party. Anybody with with me?

+0

#3 | [Aresen](#) | January 21st, 2010 at 11:48 am

*“But what do I know? In lefty land, I’m just a Republican who does drugs.”*

NTTAWWT.

;) )

+4

#4 | [Noel St. John](#) | January 21st, 2010 at 11:48 am

*“But what do I know? In lefty land, I’m just a Republican who does drugs. ”*

Intrigued by that last sentence, I followed the link and read the article, and further tortured my intellect by reading through the comments. Doing so gave me some insight into the lefty base and I just had to shake my head. I’m reminded of 5 year olds throwing temper tantrums and using the same sort of circular logic and ad hominem arguments to attack a position not even remotely understood. (Ahem...not the the righty base is much better.)

Nevertheless, the DCCC ought to be at least bright enough to know that CATO is anything but right wing! I think this is more of an attempt to smear the image of CATO in the eyes of the equally unthinking toddlers of the conservative base.

+7

#5 | [Bronwyn](#) | January 21st, 2010 at 11:52 am

Well, if you circularize the political spectrum – which is an easy argument to make – then Cato is to the right of everyone, even if you have to go the long way ‘round.

So there’s that, you know.

+5

#6 | [Michael Chaney](#) | January 21st, 2010 at 12:08 pm

The point of calling Cato “right-wing” is to delegitimize them and send a signal to the readers “don’t bother finding out more about them”. As a libertarian, you quickly get used to the right thinking you’re a leftist and the