



ECONLOG PERMANENT LINK | FEBRUARY 12, 2010

Printable format for http://econlog.econlib.org/archives/2010/02/will_wilkinson_2.html**Will Wilkinson and Brink Lindsey Get the Finger**

FAQ: Print Hints

Arnold Kling

from **Ed Kilgore**, of the Progressive Policy Institute.

Certainly, few self-conscious libertarians have much tolerance for racism, but they are encouraging a point of view about "welfare" that has long been catnip to racists. And that's a problem for liberals. How can an alliance last in a climate where a progressive think tanker has to look down the rostrum at that nice Cato Institute colleague and wonder if he or she privately thinks the poor are "looter scum";

People like Wilkinson, Lindsey, and myself have indeed spoken out against "welfare" of the auto bailout and the "looter scum" of the bailed-out financial industry. On the other hand, when people criticize my pro-immigration stance on the grounds that we will be adding to the welfare burden and thereby enlarging the state, my reply is that welfare is not the state enlargement that I fear. What I fear is the state's control of education, health care, the financial industry, and so on.

Ed Kilgore exemplifies what Thomas Sowell calls "using the poor as mascots." That is, when a libertarian opposes a statist agenda, Kilgore comes back and accuses us of being racists and hurting the poor.

I am disappointed but not at all surprised to see this attitude expressed. In fact, I am glad to see this rhetoric out in the open. If the rest of the Progressive movement wants to rally to this flag, it helps clarify the situation for libertarians.

TRACKBACKS (0 to date)

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COMMENTS (13 to date)

Latest Comment

coyote writes:

The minimum wage, the Davis-Bacon Act, and trade protectionism have been "catnip" for racists for years. Can I assume progressives have stopped supporting these programs?

Posted February 12, 2010 6:52 PM

CVD writes:

Professor Kling,

You say:

"On the other hand, when people criticize my pro-immigration stance on the grounds that we will be adding to the welfare burden and thereby enlarging the state, my reply is that welfare is not the state enlargement that I fear. What I fear is the state's control of education, health care, the financial industry, and so on."

But we live in a democracy. Immigrants, especially those from south of the border, tend to be highly supportive of increased state control of education, health care, and so on.

If you support said immigration, then given our current political system you are - of necessity - supporting ever more government intervention in these areas.

Posted February 12, 2010 6:54 PM

dWj writes:

I've been accused of "tolerating racism" for not supporting substantial state penalties on racists.

Posted February 12, 2010 7:00 PM

Drea writes:

...a Nietzschean disdain for the poor and minorities that tends to dovetail with the atavistic and semi-racist habits of reactionary cultural traditionalists. After all, it is only a few steps from the Tea Party movement's founding "rant"—in which self-described Randian business commentator Rick Santelli blasted "losers" who couldn't pay their mortgages—to populist backlash against all transfer payments of any type, complaints about people "voting for a living" instead of "working for a living," and paranoid conspiracy theories about groups like ACORN.

This was an interesting chunk. I don't read Santelli, but I think of "losers" as people who used their high-priced house as an ATM, and "voting for a living" as public sector employee unions. Neither of those are poor and minorities.

Posted February 12, 2010 8:15 PM

JamieNYC writes:

I second CVD's post. More broadly, the sad reality is that one has to ask why are the countries like Haiti poor in the first place? Not endowed with natural resources? Neither is Denmark.

By letting the immigrants in (I'm one), we also import their political culture. For most poor countries, that translates into tolerance of corruption, lack of respect for the law, sectarianism etc.

I do have sympathy for libertarianism, but the broad ideological statements, such as free immigration, simply do not translate well into the real world.

Posted February 12, 2010 10:36 PM

Kunal writes:

How can an alliance last in a climate where a libertarian has to look down the rostrum at that nice New Republic colleague and wonder if he or she privately thinks it is a good idea to have sexual relations with a dog against it will?

Posted February 13, 2010 12:10 AM

agnostic writes:

It's actually worse. Suppose we allowed in immigrants who we knew would vote for more government in education, healthcare, and finance. To make this palatable, this was done on the condition that we wouldn't allow them to vote -- we'll let you come here and enjoy a higher standard of living, but we're not going to let you vote in bigger government in health, finance, and education.

Still there would be the result of bigger government in those sectors. Why? Because the majority culture,