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VISTAS FOR RADICAL ACTION

Just because Ronald Reagan was elected President does not mean that all federal employees are supporting his Administration or its policies. Many of them are leftist ideologues who look upon the Reagan Administration as an unfortunate interlude which must be survived by the bureaucracy and, meanwhile, should be undermined whenever possible.

If the Reagan economic program is cut off at the pass by the refusal of Congress to vote the tax cuts and the return of federal funds to the states through the "block grant" program, it won't be because the American people have turned their backs on the Reagan economic program. The great victory on the budget-cut resolution reflects the authentic mood of the voters.

It will be because of lobbying with federal funds by radical activists appointed by Jimmy Carter who still have their hands in the federal till. Here is just one small example of such lobbying.

Vista (Volunteers in Service to America) is a federal agency which spends a lot of tax money on programs utilizing volunteers also. This relic from the era of the Great Society is responsible for one small example of what might be called Operation Sabotage Reagan By Using Tax Funds Against Him.

We can speculate that the thought processes of Vista employees after November 4 must have gone something like this. What is the biggest threat to our jobs and power? Answer: the Reagan tax cuts and "block grants" to return funds to the states. Why is that so bad? Because we will never get as much money as we are getting now if we have to justify our budget to the prying eyes of state officials and local citizens.

Therefore, what can we do to protect ourselves? Use the tax money in this year's budget to hurt the Reagan economic program just as much as we can, with the most demagogic rhetoric and the most extravagant smears. Let's make Reagan look like Old Scrooge himself, cruelly grinding the poor and helpless into the ground to serve the pleasures and avarice of the rich and powerful.

(more)

Of course, we don't have any secret messages from Deep Throat to confirm what we think must have been plotted by Vista employees. But what we do have is the documentary evidence of what they produced.

ACTION (the overseer agency for VISTA) gave federal tax funds to a "recipient organization" called the Institute for the Study of Civic Values. In March 1981, the Institute published a survey quiz for the stated purpose of helping citizens "assess the impact of President Reagan's Economic Recovery Program on their own communities or cities." Here is how this Vista-funded document explains its unique methodology:

"The Cruelty Index is a measure of the hardship imposed upon a community or city by Ronald Reagan's proposed budget cuts in 1982. The Greed Index is a measure of the benefits that the taxpayers -- primarily wealthy taxpayers -- will receive under the President's Tax Reduction plan in 1982."

In case you didn't get the full import of the adroit choice of the words "cruelty" and "greed," the document then purports to explain in more detail that the Reagan tax cuts would benefit the wealthy (called the "greedy"), and that the Reagan budget cuts would hurt the poor ("cruelly") by cutting their public services.

In order to spell this out in gruesome detail for those who cannot comprehend the concept of billions of dollars, the Vista-funded quiz devised a point system to make its smear use of "cruelty" and "greed" more graphic.

Each city and community is supposed to undertake its own analysis of the local impact of the Reagan program by assigning one point to every $10 million. For example, Vista gives New York City a Cruelty Index of 53, Philadelphia a Cruelty Index of 20.

In opening its investigation of this use of federal funds, the General Accounting Office stated, "It is apparently a political document intended for wide distribution and would be useful in advocacy or lobbying campaigns." Indeed, it is.

If the Reagan economic program has a hard time getting through Congress, it will be because the American taxpaying public was outspent and outmaneuvered by federal lobbyists using our tax dollars against us.

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