

Maddog Unleashed

Dance of the Elephants Is Poorly Choreographed Where Cycling Is Concerned

“Conservatives seem to have decided that bicycles are funny and un-American, like Puerto Rican food and volcano monitoring, but I don’t really see what their reasoning is.”—Matthew Iglesias at ThinkProgress.org



BY PATRICK O'GRADY

Despite the Obama administration's attempts to bring change to Washington, D.C., the culture of buffoonery continues unabated in our nation's capital. Indeed, simple-minded behavior appears to be on the increase as so-called “conservatives” flail about like Chihuahuas on a freshly waxed floor, frantically seeking traction.

Watching the wingnuts screech about socialism, stall and/or smear nominees for every post from White House janitor to Supreme Court justice, and shine Rush Limbaugh's shoes with their forked tongues, one wonders whether some Democratic pharmacist has managed to spike their Viagra with LSD.

Of particular interest is the GOP's newfound desire to get a grip on federal spending after the eight-year toga party that was the Daffy-Fudd administration, whose fiscal strategy was basically that of a gang of junkies dismantling a stately mansion in order to sell its copper plumbing.

Case in point: the House Republican leadership's much-ballyhooed proposal to cut spending by \$375 billion over the next five years. As Kevin Drum at Mother Jones noted, \$317 billion of that would come “from every budget coward's favorite gimmick: an across-the-board spending cap that (a) they know perfectly well will never happen and (b) allows them to avoid mentioning any actual specific cuts.”

Night of the Short Knives. Now, to be fair, The Associated Press reported finding 37 program cuts that could save taxpayers “more than \$23 billion over the next five years and more than \$5 billion in the first year alone”—all this, mind you, in a budget of some \$3.5 trillion.

So, which lard-packed projects are among those in the GOP's crosshairs? Why, a program that pays for building sidewalks, bike paths and crossing guards as part of the Safe Routes to School program, and federally funded transportation “enhancements” like pedestrian and bike facilities.

The Safe Routes to School cuts would save a piddling \$183 million per year, about what it costs to build a single F-22 fighter jet, train a pilot to fly it and employ a lobbyist to sell the Pentagon on the F-23 fighter jet. Alas, defense spending, no matter how profligate, is spared the Republican chopping block.

The transportation-enhancements knife cuts a little deeper—\$833 million a year when you throw in landscaping and preservation of historic facilities. But skip two space-shuttle launches and you've saved the taxpayers \$900 million. Hey, you want space travel, go watch the new “Star Trek.” (Seriously, it's not bad.)

The Plot Thickens. Or Not. Not even the GOP's legendary stupidity can account for this furious picking of nits while Godzilla runs free. Ask yourselves this: Who in this country walks or rides a bicycle anywhere when there are so many automobiles to be had? The answer: Liberals—that's who. Democrats. The Enemy.

Could the GOP be plotting to deny liberals sanctuary in socialist havens like bike paths and other “transportation enhancements?” Herd the Birkenstock-wearing, hemp-clad hordes into the potholed streets where the Hummer holds sway, with an eye toward that glorious day when the Democrat Party will hold its annual convention in a pedicab with a one-legged driver? That day of redemption, when the once-maligned Elephant re-emerges triumphant from the political shadows, trunk held high?

Nah, it's just stupidity. But let's remember this feeble assault on cycling, be thankful that its architects are but an enfeebled, bitter minority, and take care when selecting animals for the national zoo. More donkeys, fewer elephants, please.