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Money and elections in Washington: Pro wrestling, but with more respectable clothes

Submitted by danps on Fri, 02/14/2014 - 5:42am

Tags:

[money](#) ^[1]

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[kayfabe](#) ^[3]: Term in pro wrestling. Kayfabe was the unsaid rule that the wrestlers should stay in character during the show and in public appearances in order to maintain a feeling of reality (albeit suspended) among the fans.

- [Urban Dictionary](#) ^[4]

National politics never feels as much like [kayfabe](#) ^[3] to me as when Democrats talk about the awful effect of big money. The most recent example came last week, when Senate Majority PAC spokesman Ty Matsdorf talked to ~~Mean Gene Okerlund~~ ^[5] Matea Gold about a TV ad [buy from](#) ^[6] Americans For Prosperity: "It's unprecedented. It means that groups like ours have to go up early as well. We can't let those attacks go unchallenged."

Greg Sargent [helpfully translates](#) ^[7] ([via](#) ^[8]): "What that really means is: Where's the money, wealthy liberals?" *That*, and not changing the role of cash, is the point of charades like this. Washington Democrats will lob a few verbal brickbats at Citizens United, say the right things about public financing of elections, and darkly warn of the malign influence of the Koch brothers - but as soon as the latest episode is over, they are by all appearances as content with the situation as Republicans.

They don't want to overturn the current big money system, just make sure it provides them something like parity with Republicans. A party that wanted to do the former would have responded differently to events of the last few years. Charles [Pierce noted](#) ^[9] their coziness with the malefactors of great wealth and the nonexistent influence Occupy Wall Street has had on them. Digby linked to Pierce and then [summed up](#) ^[10] the situation well: "They are astonishingly comfortable in that position. It is, after all, where the money is."

If Matsdorf and company were truly worried about how to effectively respond to a deep pocketed conservative messaging machine, there's an obvious answer. It would require breaking [kayfabe](#) ^[3], though. It is this: A simple, strong, and clear platform of economic justice. Identify popular stances that are also good policy and easy to communicate, unite behind them as a group and hammer away at the resulting platform to the exclusion of everything else.

For instance: Medicare is [very popular](#) ^[11]. Raising the minimum wage is [very popular](#) ^[12]. Taxing the rich is [very popular](#) ^[13]. All are good policies, too. Here's a simple, strong, and clear platform

you could fit on a bumper sticker: Medicare for all; a living wage; tax the rich. A living wage being \$15 an hour indexed to Congress' cost of living increases, and taxing the rich meaning a new "super wealthy" top marginal rate of 70% starting at \$5,000,000. (Look at all those zeroes!)

The "simple" part of the platform is important, too. Don't try to bullshit people. Run only on those planks that have obvious and immediate benefit to citizens. Don't talk about closing loopholes (after "reform" the tax code will be even more Byzantine and skewed in favor of those who can afford fancy tax lawyers), extending credits or creating God knows what kind of tax deferred vehicles to encourage saving. All that has the whiff of snake oil, and most people will be skeptical. Contrast that with the immediate and intuitive appeal of:

Medicare for all. A living wage. Tax the rich.

Do you know what that platform does? It negates money. People don't need to be sold on it in any kind of marketing sense. They don't need to be bombarded with it again and again. They just need to be made *aware* of it. You don't need to saturate the airwaves with ads trying to persuade them. Just get the word out and the thing will sell itself. As an added bonus for Democrats, it is mightily antagonistic to those who are so lavishly funding their opponents. (And while we're waiting for that corporate personhood amendment to get rolling, do you want to know the easiest way to get big money out of politics? Make being on its side a sure loser.)

I understand the idea of cutting oneself off from the big money base and living off the land is frightening. I also understand it's easy for me to be cavalier about someone else's job prospects. Still, uniting behind a simple and clear message of economic justice is such an obvious winner that it seems the only reason to reject it is out of devotion to the status quo. In other words, because all the caterwauling is just an act. Quick, before the cameras start rolling - who's the babyface [14] and who's the heel [15] again?



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[6] http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/with-early-attacks-against-senate-democrats-afp-emerges-as-gops-most-powerful-ally/2014/02/04/fce5f7ae-8dd6-11e3-833c-33098f9e5267_story.html?hpid=z4

[7] <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/plum-line/wp/2014/02/05/dems-seriously-alarmed-by-koch-money/>

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[9] <http://www.esquire.com/blogs/politics/matt-bai-bad-advice-for-hillary-clinton-020714>

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[13] <http://www.people-press.org/2014/01/23/most-see-inequality-growing-but-partisans-differ-over-solutions/>

[14] [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Face_\(professional_wrestling\)?](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Face_(professional_wrestling)?)

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