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Dear President-Elect Obama

"Rednecks for Obama. Even we've had enough." According to the New York Times, these words were emblazoned on a Confederate flag before the historic 2008 election. What did it mean to say "Even we've had enough"?

After all, this is a nation of superstition, as per Confederate and Republican-Party legends. The vast majority of the population attests to the existence of a devil and individuated angels. Forty-five percent say aliens have visited Earth. Three times more people think there are ghosts than was the case a quarter of a century ago, and over a third avow that houses can be haunted. Eighty-four percent believe in the posthumous survival of the soul, up 24% on 1972. Only 25% subscribe to evolution, almost two-thirds anticipate millennial doom and rebirth, 55% are certain that Satan exists, 44% know there are demons (the same national proportion that has seen Mel Gibson's anti-Semitic paean to sado-masochism, *The Passion of the Christ*, where his screen and social identities of oleaginous businessman, vengeful messiah, anti-authoritarian larrikin, and right-wing real-estate magnate collided). And in the South, 44% say lightning is sent by god to punish wrongdoers. Forty-one percent are converts to fundamentalist evangelism, across a bizarre array of groups, and 18% align with the religious right. The latter are the most skeptical people in the United States population about environmental protection. Apparently there is no future for the planet. God's design is to destroy it and deliver true believers to safety in a kinky theological draft of wind (for more on these numbers, Senator, see my book *Makeover Nation: The United States of Reinvention*, Ohio State University Press, 2008. Makes a great gift for visiting dignitaries).

But the Republican Party does not serve these misguided

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souls, even though they represent its electoral core. The Party functions in the service of specific corporate interests: mineral extraction, real-estate speculation, "health care" [sic], pharmaceutical companies, and high finance. In other words, this country has been governed for almost a decade by people who are driven by their own class privilege, even as they deploy populist and anti-elitist rhetoric to captivate straight, white, god-bothering xenophobic suburb- and exurbanites.

So how have the rednecks, in whose name these elites operate, worked the fraud out? I suspect it became clear to them that the store was being minded by incompetents. Consider the litany of idiocies, from warmongering to climate-change denial and disaster mismanagement. Your election, Senator Obama, represents, among other things, a return to policy mandarinism, to rationality, to accredited expertise, to Weberian bureaucracy. Of course, this does not mean that the state operates for all under your party. Democratic governments in the United States, like Republican ones, are beholden to sectional interests, but they represent different fractions of the country: trial lawyers, culture industries, unions, and racial minorities.

But at least your advent, Senator Obama, means that scientists will be listened to rather than gagged or discredited. Policy wonks will be rewarded. The store will basically be minded by people who are trained in what they do. This bodes well for a new era in which intellect is sovereign and ignorance is in exile. That's what I think the rednecks for Obama realized was needed. I just hope your selection of Cabinet members and advisors is not beholden to the broken neoliberal fantasies of the past, as represented by the coin-operated intellectuals who stood behind you at your first press conference as president-elect. Disgraced university presidents and corporate utives are not needed. Let them apply for relief elsewhere. Show imagination in your Cabinet and advisor choices. I doubt you'll reward socialists with these positions, but at least appoint the people we taught.

Yours in struggle,

Toby Miller

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