

COLLECTIVE

Long Sunday

Norquist + Katrina = Drowning in a bathtub

Some may recall the words of hideous conservative organizer and ideologue, Grover Norquist, president of American's for tax reform:

"My goal is to cut government in half in twenty-five years," he says, "to get it down to the size where we can drown it in the bathtub."

What does it look like when he gets his wish? We've been seeing it on the news for the last 6 days--not just a city drowning, but the disposable people, the people disposed of, unaccounted for, or accounted for as expendable.

To drown government in a bathtub means three things:

1. To drown those produced as capital's remnants and remainders, its necessary excesses, to dispose of them like and with so much garbage; to drown government is really to reduce people to sewage that is simply flushed away; this has been going on for a long time; in New Orleans we are confronted with what happens with the pipes burst, back up, overflow. In short, we get the Real of the US: the poor have been left behind.

2. To drown government means to drown people's expectations for commonality and social solidarity; to think of government in the reduced terms of force or failure, never as common project; it means that any challenge all too easily swamps government, producing ever more disasters, disasters that cannot be met simply with guns and bombs. Humanitarian efforts try to take up the slack, to absorb and accomodate the discarded people. But, as they do so, the excess of the people becomes all the more striking; how can they be fit in? There is no place for them.

3. As a result, to drown government means to concentrate all energy and expectation in whatever remains of government--in the US case, again, brute military force where the solution to any problem is to demonize and exterminate.

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