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John N. Cooper's review of Garrison Keillor's "Homegrown Democrat"

By John N. Cooper, Ph.D.

Sep 2, 2004, 13:52

Garrison Keillor's new work, Homegrown Democrat [Viking Press, ISBN 0-670-03365-0] (full-text included below this review) is in equal measures an election season rant how Democrats espouse the politics of consideration and kindness while Republicans display the politics of greed and self-service, coupled with an affecting account of his growing up in Minnesota, from rural Anoka to the University. It's a quick, light read and wonderful fun while still getting at some important heartfelt current issues.

Whatever your grudges against him, this work is so St. Paul, so heartland midwestern, so Minnesotan it can have you howling with laughter and tears in the same sentence.

And it speaks clearly to why so many stick with the democrats, small 'd', even though they truly believe that Nader is right, that both the Dems and the Publicans, large 'D' and 'P' respectively, are handmaidens to and pimps for the business/corporate class.

As little difference as so many see between them, democrats are in the long run the party of others; of seeing others as they see themselves; of thinking of others and doing for them, too, as much as they can; of trying to do right by everyone, others and self, where the scope of 'others' continually, inexorably expands. Races, creeds, genders, whatever some would use to discriminate among us, the true democrats have dragged the rest of the country slowly and grudgingly, kicking and screaming, as Adlai Stevenson said, into the recognition that we're all basically the same species and all deserve so much better than what we've had, seen or been given access to.

Publicans are, on the other hand, the party of self, of private greed incorporate, of 'FU, I'm all right, Jack', of pandering to the meanest, basest, most degraded and degrading animal instincts. And they are proud of it. Keillor became a democrat, small 'd', not out of anger but from a compassion the Publicans have no sense of.

Bill Clinton says it's wrong to think so ill of others, even them: they aren't bad, they just think differently, are just sadly, pathetically mistaken. Regardless, Keillor's homegrown democrats say they, this country, this beleaguered and benighted planet deserve so much better. We just have to make it happen.

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