

## Republican Policies: An Insult and an Injury

by Ed Sullivan

Monday, May 10, 2004 12:00 AM

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The Republicans are coming here to celebrate their agenda. But what is that agenda as it affects New York City?

The Republicans are going to cut federal subsidies for housing for poor people -- Section 8 housing -- which very seriously affects New York because we have such a high percentage of people in rental housing.

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They are going to put limits on how long people can stay in public housing. New York's public housing is a success -- one of the few public housing programs in the country that is. Why? Because people do not have to move out of public housing if they succeed. They can stay and make a community. The Republicans are determined to destroy that community by requiring that people leave.

The Republican agenda includes spending billions of dollars for the Iraq folly, money that could otherwise go toward urban development. The Republican agenda includes no funding -- zero funding -- for its No Child Left Behind for our schools. This sounds great: We are going to leave no child behind, but not get any money to do it.

Tax cuts for the wealthy soak up money that might otherwise have gone for social needs. New York is one of the cities that take people who come from other countries and turn them into Americans, a job we perform for the rest of the country. And we do a very good job of it. But that requires money for the social accommodations that have to be made. The Republicans have cut lead-paint programs. How can you cut programs that try to reduce the number of children who are harmed by the presence of lead where they live or go to school?

The Patriot Act hit particularly hard in a city filled with immigrants from all over the world. The Republicans actually defend the notion that I -- or anyone else -- could walk out onto the street, get arrested for no reason with no explanation given and be held on the president's say-so that this person is an enemy of our country or is conspiring with enemies of our country. No lawyers, no family knows, no public disclosure as to the location of that person -- forever. It is like the Middle Ages. It is like Richard the Lionhearted coming back from his crusade and being held in a dungeon. It is incredible that anyone could, number one, do this and, number two, defend it.

An attack is underway on the great labor accomplishments of making work a dignified activity and providing workers with the benefits that they get from organized labor. The push to move Americans jobs to countries where workers earn less money and have fewer protections undermines the gains U.S. workers have made.

This summer, the Republicans are coming to New York to celebrate this agenda in our front yard. Imagine that a family that has insulted and abused another family has a picnic in the family's front yard. That is what they are doing to New York. It adds insult to injury -- injury that is substantive and plentiful.

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There is another New York -- beyond Radio City Music Hall, beyond Broadway, beyond Yankee Stadium. Councilmember Bill Perkins plans to invite the Republicans to come and view that New York. To view the New York of the homeless intake center. To see an emergency room in one of our city hospitals at about 3 o'clock in the morning. To see an overcrowded classroom with a teacher trying to teach kids who speak eight different languages to function as a group -- without any help from No Child Left Behind. To see a drug rehab program with people who are trying to rebuild their lives with precious little help.

We are being invaded by people who have come to celebrate an agenda that attacks us. It is insulting. I think we should tell them that.

*Ed Sullivan is a former member of the New York State Assembly from Manhattan.*