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Catfish Politics **By Larry Matthews** **BC Guest Commentator**

Every now and then I come across an item that jumps off the page and smacks me. Here's an example from the New York Times: [Catfish Farmers Fight Fish Glut and High Feed Prices](#). That was the headline. What was startling was that the federal government, the same evil, bloated, tax-and-spend, support-the-welfare-bums entity that Republicans are trying so hard to kill off, is bailing out catfish farmers by buying ten million dollars worth of frozen catfish. That's about three million pounds, in case you're wondering.

The catfish farmers being bailed out, if I may use that term, are in the poorest counties of Alabama and Arkansas, two states that, oddly enough, already get more in federal aid than they pay in federal taxes, a common issue, as it turns out, in red states. Blue states are picking up the tab in many cases. But that's another story.

The catfish story captures the reverse logic being accepted by many red state voters who are almost certain to cast their votes for the farthest right candidate they can find. Unfortunately for them, they're stuck with Mitt Romney, who only pencils in his politics and keeps his eraser handy. But he has Paul Ryan over there way to his right to wave to the folks with the torches and pitchforks.

It's a common lament on the left that the ultra-conservative Republicans have so twisted the political debate that they have the voters most likely to be hurt by the Republican agenda staunchly defending it. Working class Americans who are hanging on by their fingernails, if at all, are ready to trash the very policies that are keeping them fed. The Grand Old Party stands ready to drop food aid, health aid, rent aid, and everything else in its bottom-up plan to aid

the rich. How do the working people of the South support these schemes? Beats me.

Maybe it's the catfish aid. At moments like this I would love to be a reporter again to stick a microphone in front of Paul Ryan to ask him if he supports this kind of thing. The catfish farmers are facing two problems: Rising costs and competition from overseas. The Times quotes one of them as saying it costs him seventy-five cents to produce a pound of catfish. Frankly, I have no idea what that means, but it's important to this fellow and is, apparently, important enough to the federal government to step in.

And so federal aid from evil Washington will find its way to the ponds of Alabama and Arkansas and into the hands of people who hate the federal government and all it stands for. They will march to the polls in November and vote against their own interests. They will pass along the lies and half-truths that constitute the Republican campaign and blame all of their problems on Barack Obama and those damned liberals.

Then they'll cash the government check.

Bless their hearts, as they say down in Dixie.

BlackCommentator.com Guest Commentator, Larry Matthews, is a veteran broadcast journalist. He is the recipient of The George Foster Peabody Award for Excellence in Broadcast for his reporting on Vietnam veterans. He is also the recipient of a Columbia/DuPont Citation, Society of Professional Journalists, Associated Press, and other awards for investigative reporting. He is the author of [five books](#) including *I Used To Be In Radio: a Memoir*. Click [here](#) to reach Mr. Matthews.



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