

SANTORUM TO “PLANT HIS FLAG” IN MICHIGAN

Watch the latest video at video.insider.foxnews.com Watch the latest video at video.insider.foxnews.com I think there are two reasons that Rick Santorum is enjoying another surge in the GOP Primary Reality Show, having won all three caucus states last night, two in a blow-out.

First and foremost, Santorum is the only one of the GOP candidates to be able to somewhat credibly claim to be what Nixon (as best described by Rick Perlstein) an Orthogonian—the outsider who resents the arrogance of the elite.

Nixon’s insights into the possibilities of harnessing voter resentment, Perlstein maintains, derived from his own; indeed, he was a “serial collector of resentments.” As a student at Whittier College, a young Nixon addressed his own painful exclusion from the school’s social elites, the Franklins, by forming his own club of outsiders, the Orthogonians, open to “the strivers, those not to the manner born.” For Perlstein, the Franklin-Orthogonian divide captures perfectly a split between social and economic elites and everyone else (at least among whites) that Nixon manipulated to his advantage.

His signal achievement was in successfully casting his Democratic opponents as Franklins and enlisting many non-elites into the Orthogonian ranks. He thus seeded the ground for the culture wars that sprouted during the 1960s and persisted, in varying forms, ever since. For the white suburban middle class, admiring Nixon involved

“seeing through the pretensions of the cosmopolitan liberals who claimed to know so much better than you . . . what was best for your country.” As a presidential candidate in 1968, he gave them a name: “the ‘silent center,’ ” those “ ‘millions . . . who do not demonstrate, who do not picket or protest loudly’ ” and who “lived virtuously.” Within a few years, he fastened on the term that would endure: the Silent Majority.

In last night’s victory speech Santorum took on Obama, repeating over and over that Obama thinks he “knows better” than Santorum’s supporters. He said Obama doesn’t listen. And while that’s not much different from the nastiness and victimization that Newt performed to win the South Carolina primary, coming from a “grandiose” college professor it just sounds off. And Mitt and his Cayman Island tax shelters?

If you ignore Santorum’s self-dealing on PACs and his stint as a lobbyist, you can almost believe that Santorum has faced the same challenges as many Americans.

This year’s Republican voters—the relatively few who are turning out to vote—hate the knowing technocracy Obama is giving them, and Santorum can play on their resentment of that in a way Mitt and Newt can’t.

But Santorum’s wins have, also, been focused (with the exception of Colorado) on Midwestern states. One reason for that, I believe, is his explicit call for manufacturing, pushing to eliminate taxes on manufacturing in this country. Whether or not you believe he would do that, he speaks to the many benefits of manufacturing in a way that resonates in the Midwest. (Nate Silver predicted Santorum’s strength in the Midwest last week.)

And so Rick Santorum has—predictably, in my

opinion—announced he plans to focus on MI rather than AZ for the next GOP primary day, February 28 (suck it, bmaz!).

But with the next major contests for the GOP nomination in Arizona and Michigan on Feb. 28, Santorum said on msnbc's "Morning Joe" Wednesday morning that, "We think Michigan's a great place for us to plant our flag."

The reason is clear — Santorum, who hails from a blue-collar, manufacturing state, hopes he can translate that into votes in other blue-collar, manufacturing states like Michigan, where he can at least win a portion of the available delegates by doing well, and Ohio, which votes on March 6, Super Tuesday.

"We're heading to Michigan," Santorum said. "We're really excited about that. we're also heading to Ohio, Super Tuesday's going to be a very big day for us."

On paper, AZ and MI are both strong states for Mitt. AZ has a significant Mormon population and in 2008 he did well in the Mountain West (just ignore that CO result last night). MI, of course, is where Mitt was born, and a bunch of buildings around Lansing bear his father's name.

But there's that whole "Let Detroit go bankrupt" line, which has been replayed here in MI constantly in the last year, the outsourcing of jobs (like that of our governor, whom we're getting tired of). In both states, I think Mitt's affluence would work badly this year.

In short, if Santorum's Sugar Daddy will provide him the cash, he might certainly make MI interesting (though we allow crossover voting and Democrats have already started talking about how to make trouble). And if Mitt lost—or even underperformed in his birth state—it might raise real questions about his viability.

So I expect MI to be seeing a lot of Mitt and Santorum in the next few weeks. This blog might even look like an old-time political blog in the next few weeks.