

OBAMA SIDLES UP TO THE PEOPLE NOT CREATING JOBS

From the Department of reading the wrong message in an election is this news, of Timmeh Geithner meeting with the Chamber of Commerce's odious Thomas Donohue to talk about international issues (read: "let's talk about other countries we can ship American jobs to").

But this week, the Treasury secretary, Timothy F. Geithner, met with the chief executive, Thomas J. Donohue, to discuss international economic issues. In his news conference on Wednesday, Mr. Obama came close to conceding the chamber's main argument, that American businesses had concluded – wrongly, in Mr. Obama's view – that his policies were antibusiness.

"I think business took the message that, well, gosh, it seems like we may be always painted as the bad guy," Mr. Obama told reporters. He acknowledged that a relationship with the business community had not been "managed by me as well as it needed to be."

[snip]

"I've got to take responsibility in terms of making sure that I make clear to the business community as well as to the country that the most important thing we can do is to boost and encourage our business sector, and make sure that they're hiring," Mr. Obama said. "We do have specific plans in terms of how we can structure that outreach."

The outreach includes the meeting this week between Mr. Geithner and Mr. Donohue, according to an administration

official briefed on the discussions. The pair talked about the president's coming Asia trip, including issues relating to the Group of 20 economic meeting, China and South Korea, said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss the private meeting.

Now, on its face, this is about Obama's renewed push to sign a Free Trade agreement with South Korea, a country with no intention of engaging in Fair Trade with us.

But the Administration appears to want it to symbolize something larger—outreach to the people who have to start creating jobs to get our economy running again.

There's a problem with that.

First of all, there's the problem of the national Chamber's increasing irrelevance to real American businesses. Individual companies are finding the Chamber's willful ignorance to be detrimental to their business interests and general grounding in reality. Local Chambers are making an explicit point of distinguishing themselves from the national Chamber. And it's not really clear whether the US Chamber of Commerce represents American companies more generally, or rather foreign business.

So at a time when both local Chambers of Commerce and individual corporations are signaling the national Chamber does not represent their interests, then why choose the Chamber as target for outreach? Why not reach out to those splintering from the Chamber's explicitly anti-Democratic stance?

Furthermore, the companies whose interests the Chamber largely did boost this election have no interest in hiring. With money so cheap (thanks Helicopter Ben), they're better off just playing more financial games than actually making something someone wants to buy.

Sure, Obama needs to listen to businesses to

learn a little something about what will keep or create jobs in this country. But talking to Thomas Donohue about how to ship jobs away is not the way to do that.