

VIRGINIA DOESN'T WANT DETROIT TO GET CONVENTION DOLLARS

About 14 months ago, I was at Netroots Nation in Providence, RI. RI has, like MI, been really battered by the Great Recession. Nevertheless, we had just seen Providence's glorious WaterFire installment. And I had spent lots of time talking to local politicians getting a boost from Netroots Nation's presence.

At a party that night, I got into a conversation with a top Netroots Nation organizer, describing a protest of GE's shareholder meeting at Detroit's Renaissance Center earlier that year. I described the responses people who had flown in for the event – including people who'd grown up in MI and people who'd never been in the state – had to seeing Detroit. Partly it was trauma in response to devastation of the city, the empty spaces, the decay. Partly it was a recognition of the energy and beauty that remain in the city. For Americans to see both the devastation and the hope of the city was, I thought, an important experience before the rest of the country follows the disinvestment and decline of Detroit.

The Netroots Nation person said, "What do you think about holding Netroots Nation in Detroit, so everyone gets that experience?"

I'm sure the NN organizers were already considering the idea, but I like to think my enthusiasm, as well as that of Eclectablog, who shortly thereafter joined into the conversation and added how much he drives into Detroit to go out, had a role in NN picking Detroit as the location for next year's convention.

Yesterday, the Detroit News published a crazy op-ed, from a right wing operative who doesn't even live in MI, claiming that NN's selection to come to Detroit was all about unions and their purported failures.

Detroit's bankruptcy has shed light on the ugly face of progressive governance, and is a haunting indicator of what can happen when government lets public-sector unions bleed taxpayers dry.

As the city faces difficult decisions about its financial future, one would expect progressives and labor interests to divert attention from the fallout.

But instead, they're bringing Netroots Nation, a conference of progressive activists, to Detroit next year to promote the same model of government at the national level.

Eclectablog skewers the revisionist history of Detroit's decline and the corporatist backing of the op-ed here.

This is the standard, boilerplate misdirection we've come to expect from corporatist groups funded by SPN and AFP like the Michigan's Mackinac Center: portray teachers, once considered pillars in our community, as greedy for daring to ask for a living wage, good healthcare benefits, and, God-forbid, a pension that allows them retire without living in poverty.

It's the same approach used by corporate sponsored groups and wealthy individuals like Dick Devos across the country on an ever-increasing level.

Oddly, Telford's op-ed is posted under the topic of "Detroit Bankruptcy". The fact is, however, it has nothing to do with Detroit's bankruptcy. It's a propaganda piece written by a corporatist living in Virginia who is attempting to rewrite Michigan history to suit his group's anti-union agenda.

In Michigan, we know better. We know that the labor movement, which was born

in Michigan, created the middle class. We know that unions brought us the 40-hour work week and raised the standard of living of our citizens so that they, too, could enjoy the benefits of a successful industrial manufacturing economy. They protect workers from the greed and excess of profit-minded corporations ensuring a safe workplace and sensible environmental protections.

It's funny. Here's a guy who lives in VA, a place that has benefitted from 12 years of massive government stimulus, going out of his way to speak out against Detroit – a city that owes a small part of its woes to policies set in the DC Metro area – winning convention dollars from a progressive organization (backed, I'm proud to say, by enthusiastic residents of the state).

How insecure do you have to be to go that far out of your way to discredit the idea of people from all over the states coming to Detroit to network, spend money, and have fun?