

From *The Glenn Beck Show*:

## The Obama Agenda

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In his Philadelphia speech kicking off his inauguration weekend train ride to Washington, Barack Obama proclaimed "What is required is a new declaration of independence, not just in our nation, but in our own lives - from ideology and small thinking, prejudice and bigotry - an appeal not to our easy instincts but to our better angels."

Few sentences give us a better sense of Barack Obama's dare I say ideology.

Look at the things then-President-elect Obama lumps with the i-word: small-thinking, prejudice, bigotry. It certainly sounds like Obama thinks ideology is not only bad, but really bad. This is hardly the first time he's made it clear that he thinks ideology is backward and undesirable. Remember his famous comment that small town folks who bitterly cling to their guns and religion because of the lack of jobs and other progressive economic policies? The press downplayed the rest of the quote. He went on to say that the same people might also cling to "antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."

In other words, ideology is something people who don't know better, who can't tell right from wrong, use to explain the world. Or, even simpler: Ideologues are people who disagree with Barack Obama.

In remarks shortly before the inauguration, Obama cast himself as an open-minded pragmatist. He said that he's receptive to new ideas wherever they come from, Republican, Democrat, conservative, liberal. But he also insisted that the one thing we all know is: "only government" can fix the mess we're in. Never mind that this, too, is an ideological position. Indeed, Obama holds any number of ideological positions, on abortion he's to the left of NARAL, he believes everyone is better off when we "spread the wealth around."

Now, I disagree with many of Obama's positions -- but not because they are *ideological*. There's nothing wrong with ideological positions. Heck why is "anti-trade sentiment" an ideological position but pro-trade sentiment not? For the record, I'm very, very pro-trade. But I'm not ashamed to admit mine is an ideological position. Ideology is simply a collection of principles, a checklist of aims and priorities we hold up to important questions. "Does this protect our liberties?" is an ideological question, and a good one. I'm not embarrassed to ask it.

But this misses the point. Obama is laying down a rhetorical perimeter around his administration: Any criticism that questions his assumptions will be deemed "ideological" and, hence, illegitimate. Everything he does will be cast as pragmatic problem solving, every objection will be dismissed as the rants and gripes of dogmatists and ideologues.

This is a very old tactic. Woodrow Wilson, the first PhD president, insisted that his policies were rooted in the immutable laws of science and anyone who objected was a boob, a rube or, sometimes, a traitor. FDR promised that he, too, was a "pragmatist" who would take good ideas from his supposedly dispassionate Brain Trust. The New Deal itself was sold to the American people as a "post-ideological" enterprise. Whatever the merits of the New Deal, few people today looking back at it think of it as an ideology free effort. It's worth noting that this was precisely the argument laid out by fascist movements across Europe, who proclaimed themselves to be "beyond ideology" and "neither right nor left."

John F. Kennedy unveiled precisely the same argument. Don't worry your pretty little heads, Americans, we have the best and brightest here and they know what to do, Kennedy told Americans. "Most of the problems ... that we now face, are technical problems, are administrative problems," Kennedy explained, and these problems should be taken out of the give-and-take of politics and left to the experts. Even Michael Dukakis tried to play this card, arguing in his Democratic acceptance speech in 1988 that the issue of the election was "competence, not ideology."

What's offensive about this argument is not only that it assumes anyone who disagrees with liberal conventional wisdom is somehow unhinged from reality, but that liberals themselves have a monopoly on commonsense.

But that doesn't mean it isn't effective. Americans like to think they're pragmatists. They've been taught for years that being ideological is bad. Worse, mainstream journalists are convinced they're objective and dispassionate (stop laughing). This post-partisan rhetoric is exactly what they love to hear because it confirms all of their biases. That's why the national press loves politicians like Michael Bloomberg and Arnold Schwarzenegger. Their nominal Republicans who define their "post-partisanship" as signing onto every liberal assumption about the role of the state.

The size and cost of government will expand enormously over the next 12 to 18 months. If you have a problem with that don't be surprised when you're called an "ideologue."

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