# Twitter Thread by When the bees die, we die too.



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@brucewilson

## I'm feeling kind of bored and at loose ends, so I'm going to start serializing, in tweets, my 2006 ~10,000 word "Training Manual for the New American Left"

## Here goes:

1. The following might be considered as a treatise on a strategy or for progressives in coming years. It is not at all necessary for those reading the following to agree with every point made in the document as long as there is acceptance of several underlying premises:

2. The new conservative right has achieved at least partial control of many of the significant institutions in American society, especially in politics, media, and to a lesser extent in business and - increasingly - in the area of religion.

3. Meanwhile, political progressives have failed to effectively defend enlightenment values and mainstream institutions from a sustained attack that has been ongoing now for several decades, and...

4. progressives have almost wholly missed the parallel construction, by the new American right - largely now the Christian and religious right - of an entire parallel nation, a shadow nation with its own alternate institutions, culture, assumptions, and even versions of history..

5...and science. We have slept through the last several decades while the new right has planned, organized and built.

6. Political progressives from almost every quarter, all who seek creative solutions to construct a better tomorrow rather than look longingly towards a partially imagined past colored by nostalgia and wishful thinking, have been out-strategized, out-organized, outspent...

7. ..and out-thought. We may not have lost in the realm of ideas but we surely have failed to broadcast our ideas effectively into the American mainstream and into popular culture.

8. We have failed to live our values because we have failed to advance or even defend them effectively in the the cultural realm.

9. For the failures listed above, politically progressive ideas have become increasingly marginalized in American popular culture, in politics, in media, in almost every significant sphere of American life.

10. The following, our underlying cultural premises and values, are under serious attack and are at risk. Respect for cultural and political pluralism and the rights of minorities, belief in looking forward to and building for the future...

11. ..belief that acknowledges changing Global realities in this interconnected world and does not in reactive fear attempt to roll back time towards imagined halcyon days but which seeks constructive solutions for a better tomorrow...

12. .. and our world view based in the Enlightenment values of inquiry, and scientific exploration that lead towards more, not less, objective truth and that build rather than degrade the moral foundations of society : and our faith that science and religion are not opposed...

13. ..but complimentary realms and - for those of us who believe in a creator - that exploration of the nature of physical reality only glorifies the beauty and mystery of the creation, the world in which we live. These central progressive values are now at risk.

14. Because progressive values are becoming marginalized in American culture progressive attempts at political organizing - long underfunded also as liberal political strategists have pursued politics as a mere exercise in effective PR, advertising, and triangulation...

15. - have been less and less effective as American cultural values have gradually moved, pushed by the sustained efforts of the American new right, towards a laissez-faire and theocratic cultural set point favored by business interests and Christian Reconstructionism.

16. To reverse the erosion of progressive values and progressive political strength, progressives must pursue a dual strategy : while ramping up efforts at political organizing, and at building effective communication and collaboration among progressive, liberal...

17. ..and at times even libertarian and conservative political factions in order to advance our agenda, progressives must build, as the new right has done their own parallel institutions while at the same time they reassert their values and ideas in mainstream American culture..

18. .. to challenge the new American right in every geographic area and in every sphere rather than retreat to increasingly beleaguered urban enclaves: progressive must win the battle over whose ideas, and in the end whose values, will hold sway in American hearts and minds.

19. The following is a short treatise on strategy and tactics we might consider to advance those goals. As a important note : the word "environment" does not appear in the following text and that is by design : even though human existence is dependent on the biological realm...

20. ..the well-being of planetary biological systems are now at risk from Global human impact, & so mitigation of that human impact, & a lessening of potential for catastrophic climatic change & biological systems collapse, is predicated upon changes

in human culture & politics.

21. Further - and a key point - this strategy is not meant to supplant existing political activism but is intended to address a key strategic collapse in the American left over the last few decades : politics are predicated on underlying cultural beliefs, but...

22. ..but the left has ceded the realm of culture to the colonization of laissez faire market ideology, media advertising and pop culture, and to the gradual advance of new American and religious right beliefs.

23. Thus, progressives find themselves increasingly marginalized and even vilified.

Progressives should not cede the political realm, nor should they slack off in their efforts...

24. .. in fact, the strategy outlined below will, if anything, increase progressive energy for political engagement.

25. Some of what is written below may be contentious, and no one will agree on the whole. That is natural, and it is not the intent that everyone should agree with everything, but the following can serve as a general outline for effectively reversing the political and cultural...

26. ..erosion of progressive and enlightenment values in American culture and politics : if we will not work for and learn new methods to advance our values in the face of adversity, are they really our values at all ?

27. Introduction

This essay does not include a theoretical justification for, or even a definition of, a progressive (i.e., culturally progressive) society. Other writers have already done this with far more skill and erudition than I would be able to.

28. For the sake of this essay, I will assume that the reader is already familiar with and sympathizes with the goal of a progressive society at some level.

However, few of those progressive thinkers, or anyone influenced by progressive thought, have made serious attempts...

29. .. to directly put their ideas into practice. The unspoken assumption seems to be that if enough time is spent improving our intellectual sophistication and honing our arguments, or hurling invective and bickering, and bemoaning the latest scandal du jour..

30. ..on liberal internet forums, that our ideas and outlook will win more and more converts due simply to their irresistible appeal, and by some mysterious mechanism which no one has ever chosen to explain...

31. ..our society will slowly but surely learn to cherish progressive and enlightenment values.

This way of thinking must be categorically rejected.

This essay is based on the belief that the truth of an idea is not the primary reason for its acceptance.

32. Far more important is the energy and dedication of the idea's promoters--in other words, the individuals composing a social or political movement. The cultural progressive movement in particular has paid next to no attention..

33. ..to the qualities of the people working in the movement, and the relation of such qualities to the achievement of our goals. At least part of the reason for our failure must be attributed to insufficient interest by progressives in organization,..

34. ..the personal development of activists, and--most importantly--action and engagement in the world. The progressive movement has suffered, in other words, from a lack of follow-through on its most meaningful ideas.

35. The Problem--An Over reliance on Politics As Usual

The progressive movement is defensive, defeatist, depressed, and apologetic. It lacks self-confidence, virility, energy, intensity, vigor, aggressiveness, vitality, and a firm belief in the rightness of its cause.

36. This is because progressives have failed to devote the proper amount of energy to developing an alternative cultural world-view opposed to the dominant rightist one. They have instead devoted much of their energy to electing vaguely sympathetic politicians...

37. ..lobbying the government to pass or overturn particular laws, and in the identity politics of promoting agendas of chosen, individual groups that rarely collaborate in meaningful ways or even acknowledge a shared, common agenda.

38. There are two problems with this strategy. The first and more obvious is that it is exceedingly and progressively more difficult to exert political influence when the cultural assumptions underlying progressive political goals are being steadily driven from, or supplanted..

39. .., in the popular culture if no serious attempt to retard or reverse that erosion of progressive cultural influence is ever made.

40. Secondly, an over reliance on political change via laws and court decisions seems to reinforce the very politicization of society that progressives often bemoan, by ratifying the notion that an individual's personal happiness is inextricably bound up in the activity...

41. ..(or inactivity) of government. It is not enough to demand equal rights for minority groups or acquire those by judicial fiat : the majority must be persuaded or backlash politics become almost inevitable.

42. Ground hard won in court battles or legislative bills signed into law must be defended in the cultural realm. Government must be seen as promoting majority values...

43. .., and the American majority's enthusiasm for societal diversity, equal rights for minority groups, and political pluralism has diminished in recent years.

44. Meanwhile, although government is certainly intrusive and although it has grown every more dysfunctional in terms of the foundational principles of American democracy, the government is not yet totalitarian.

45. There are plenty of opportunities to make our society more culturally progressive, and our lives richer and fuller, apart from political change, but progressives have shown very little interest in pursuing those opportunities.

46. They have shown far more interest both in expanding personal political freedoms and in asserting identity politics, but also mainly in withdrawing from the fray altogether - in a failure to advance or even vigorously defend, in the realms of politics and culture...

47. ..pluralist and progressive values they profess to hold - than in making good use of the freedom they already have. As a result, they are now embattled in both areas : progressive and individual and minority rights are all under attack.

48. The result of these un-holistic and solipsist tendencies on the part of progressives is a society that increasingly does not recognize culturally progressive views, and is gradually coming to despise them.

49. The Right has long understood that nothing can be achieved politically unless and until one can capture the imagination of the people--and imaginations are seldom captured by policy wonks on C-SPAN.

50. They understand that a governing regime must acquire moral legitimacy before it can win the consent of the people, and all governments, particularly one such as ours, require some level of consent to govern.

51. The relatively recent successes of New Right ideas in law and legislation have only been made possible because their proponents have first developed broad influence over cultural institutions--e.g., the media...

52. ..(especially media broadcast capability), religious institutions, publishing houses, and advertising agencies. Progressives have by and large been surrendering influence over these institutions to the Right...

53. ..with any opposition being limited to assorted muffled complaints and pathetic appeals for fairness. Meanwhile, progressives dedicate themselves to scattershot political activism - and disjointed protest politics - all the more furiously in the hope that they can...

54. ..compensate for their weakness in the nonpolitical sectors of society. These efforts in large part must be dismissed as hopeless and self-delusional.

55. Progressives must honestly assess the predicament that we are in. We must understand that the American people are no longer on our side, at least not reliably so, and they will be less so as time goes on.

56. But more worrisome still is the fact that progressives themselves often no longer understand or support a truly culturally progressive vision of America.

57. Being progressive has come to mean nothing more nuanced than holding the belief that everyone has the inalienable right to pursue one's life without concern for the wider political and cultural realm of American life : the ethic of engagement in...

58. ..American civic and political life has atrophied and the core of the progressive agenda, the advancement of social and economic justice and equality, has been...

59. ..in large part banished from the mainstream political calculus even as it is in process of being supplanted in American culture by rightist ideological beliefs.

60. True traditionalist progressives are now seen as oddities who must be tolerated, or even silenced in order that the movement appear credible in the eyes of Washington D.C. consultant-oracles of allegedly sound liberal political advice.

61. Further, an overarching basic problem confronting us is that those who are familiar with the theoretical underpinnings of progressivism are not particularly interested in putting their ideas into practice, and those who are engaged in activism are not well-read...

62. ..and are obsessed with public policy matters. Those who think do not act, and those who act do not think. If this continues, the progressive movement will cease to exist in every way but name.

63. The dire predicament in which we find ourselves demands a drastic change in underlying progressive strategy. We will never succeed in taking over, or retaking, political structures until we can convince the American people that we can be trusted...

64. ..to take them over, and to do that we must win the people over culturally--by defining how people ought to act, how they ought to perceive the world around them, and what it means to live the good life.

65. Political arrangements can only be formed after these fundamental questions have been answered.

Once this basic belief is accepted, our next task is to develop the means by which it can be put into practice.

66. We must develop a network of parallel cultural institutions existing side-by-side with rightist dominated mainstream and rightist alternative cultural institutions.

67. The building and promotion of these institutions will require the development of a movement that will not merely reform the existing postwar progressive movement, but will in fact be forced to supersede it--if it is to succeed at all--because...

68. ..it will pursue a very different strategy and be premised on a very different view of its role in society.

Our movement--which we will call the New Progressivist movement--will not seek to immediately replace the dominant culture.

69. A retreat will allow us to regroup and find our bearings. The overemphasis on somehow effecting change through fancy political positioning, marches, slogans, and ephemeral, media oriented, symbolic political protest activism has left us...

70. ..disoriented, distracted, and overly prone to accept the creeping advance in the cultural assumptions promoted by the Right. We need to re-center and regroup, to consolidate both our political cultural base in order to enable eventual strategic victory.

71. A central mission of this movement is to advance a true progressivist counterculture based on altruism, excellence, and self discipline. The New progressivists will not be exclusively altruistic, but many of them inevitably will be.

72. What binds the New Progressivist is a belief that each individual has a duty to obey a higher good than her or his own will and appetite. New Progressivists reject materialism, hedonism, consumerism, egoism, and the cult of self-actualization which permeate modern life.

73. We share a willingness to face reality and repudiate ideology--i.e., a set of beliefs that bear no relation to how people really think and how people really live.

There will be three main stages in the unfolding of this movement.

74. The first stage will be devoted to the development of a highly motivated elite able to coordinate future activities. The second stage will be devoted to the development of institutions designed to make an impact on the wider elite...

75. ...and a relatively small minority of the masses. The third stage will involve changing the overall character of American popular culture.

76. Still Engaged--But Outside of Politics

It must be emphasized that this new movement will not be "disengaged" from the wider society, only "differently engaged." We are, quite simply, replacing political activism with cultural activism as the center of our focus.

77. And while the visibility of the new movement will be less pronounced than the existing (political) progressive movement in the short term, the seeds that we now sow will have dramatic repercussions over the long term.

78. We have the capacity to fundamentally transform the face of American culture in the 21st century by following a different path, one built on the aggressive dissemination of our cultural values, rather than the idle hope that...

79. ..enough of our cultural values still remain in the body of the American people to carry us on to a few more isolated electoral victories.

80. We will never stop being engaged in the wider culture. We will not "hunker down" and wait for the storm to blow over. Our strategy will be to bleed this corrupt culture dry. We will pick off the most intelligent and creative individuals in our society...

81. .the individuals who help give credibility to the current regime. To do this, we will promote a set of beliefs more compelling than that of our opponents. We will launch a movement with more energy and more intensity than our opponents are capable of summoning.

82. When the choice is made clear, the people--cultural elites and non-cultural elites alike--will vote with their feet by either joining or patronizing our institutions and abandoning those of the Right, and the reigning rightist regime will collapse from lack of support.

83. Our movement will be entirely destructive, and entirely constructive. Existing institutions which we cannot reform we will weaken, and eventually destroy. We will endeavor to knock our opponents off-balance and unsettle them at every opportunity.

84. All of our constructive energies will be dedicated to the creation of our own institutions and centers of cultural strength.

We will maintain a constant barrage of criticism against the Right. We will attack the very legitimacy of the Right.

85. We will not give them a moment's rest. We will endeavor to prove that the Right does not deserve to hold sway over the heart and mind of a single American. We will offer constant reminders that there is an alternative, there is a better way.

86. When people have had enough of the sickness and decay of today's American culture, they will be embraced by and welcomed into the New Progressivist movement.

87. The rejection of the existing society by the people will thus be accomplished by pushing them and pulling them simultaneously.

We will use guerrilla tactics to undermine the legitimacy of the dominant regime.

88. We will take advantage of every available opportunity to spread the idea that there is something fundamentally wrong with the existing state of affairs. For example, we could have every member of the movement put a bumper sticker on his car..

89. .. that says something to the effect of "Feeling Sick ? How's Your Health Care Plan ?" This will change nobody's mind immediately; but it will raise awareness and consciousness that there is a problem.

90. Most of all, it will contribute to a vague sense of uneasiness and dissatisfaction with existing society. We need this if we hope to start picking people off and bringing them over to our side. We need to break down before we can build up.

91. We must first clear away the flotsam of a decayed culture.

In terms of our long term prospects, because we will be seen as a purely defensive movement, not interested in imposing our views on anyone, only interested in being left alone...

92. ..we will surely gain the sympathy of the public. The dominant culture will see its life-force being sapped, and it will grow terrified. It will do whatever it takes to destroy its assailant.

93. This will lead to the perception that the dominant leftist culture is empty, hollow, desperate, and has lost its mandate to rule, because its only basis for authority is coercion.

94. Sympathy from the American people will increase as our opponents try to persecute us, which means our strength will increase at an accelerating rate due to more defections--and the enemy will collapse as a result.

95. Remaining Importance of Defensive Politics

We must stay involved in the political arena. We do not expect to make any gains through politics. But as our movement grows, the Right will become increasingly likely to try to use the powers of the state...

96. ..to squelch our movement, using whatever pretext they are able to invent. We will need to stay engaged in politics for purely defensive purposes. But all hope for long-term restoration must lie with the new movement.

97. Our only involvement in the political process should be designed to more effectively accomplish secession from, and perhaps eventually, a widespread influence over, the wider culture.

98. We have repeatedly shot ourselves in the foot by expecting too much from the Democratic Party. Of course, New Traditionalists should not defend the Democratic Party when it mimics the ideology of the Right or pushes legislation that makes the government more intrusive...

99. ..than it currently is. But we should not sacrifice a united front by trying to badger the Democratic Party into doing what it is incapable of doing.

100. That is a waste of the political capital of the party and the time and energy of our people, simply for the sake of "fighting the good fight."

101. New Progressivists and Liberals

There are operational liberals and there are ontological liberals. There is nothing in this movement that an operational liberal would find objectionable. It does not seek...

102. ..to replace an intrusive rightist state with an intrusive progressivist state. Moreover, the likelihood that this movement would result in a liberal society is far higher than the likelihood of any strategy succeeding that self-identified liberals are advocating...

103. ..because this movement does not promote a direct confrontation with the state, but a sort of "weaning off," or a "walking away" from the state. The state will lose its power when people no longer feel they need it, and only then.

104. Our goal should be to teach the cultural elite, and all people, to find meaning in their lives outside of politics. If they do, perhaps they will leave the rest of us alone.

105. But the New Progressivist movement must be willing to lose allies among the liberals we brought on board the postwar progressive coalition. While our movement is not anti-freedom, and the practical effect of our ultimate ascendancy to political power...

106. ..(should that happen) would be an increase in political freedom for Americans, we choose not to make a fetish of political freedom. We recognize that there are other freedoms besides political freedom--such as the freedom not to be...

107. ..subjected to a barrage of ideologically driven media propaganda at every turn. In fact, it could be argued that this is a more important freedom, because popular culture is considerably more pervasive than the hand of government in most people's lives.

108. The ontological liberals make their arguments in terms that the perfectly happy life is a life free from all restraint. The use of these arguments has been a convenient way to achieve some of the short-term goals of liberals, because this argument...

109. ..is presented in ontological terms acceptable to the Right--but it has been disastrous to American society. It was an alluring temptation that should have been resisted. It has reaffirmed the world-view of the rightist, which holds the unbridled ego at its center.

110. We have undermined the foundation of any resistance to the Right based on the promotion of a fundamentally different world-view. This devil's bargain has therefore helped to perpetuate the decimation of traditional American culture, with its accumulated wisdom...

111. ..and mores and traditions of self-restraint, which is the basis for any hope of a truly workable political freedom.

Liberals must make their arguments in terms of the moral benefits of freedom, and not in terms of the glories of nihilism...

112. ..if we can consider them allies and not opponents. As cultural activism becomes more important to our movement, and political activism less so, we may find that we have less and less in common with many liberals whose philosophical foundations are not sound.

113. Movement Must Serve as a Force of Social Shaming in Its Intermediate Stage

We must create a countervailing force that is just as adept as the Right at exerting societal pressure on people and institutions that are used as tools of right-wing activism...

114. ..but are not ideologically committed, such as media and news celebrities, multinational corporations, and business leaders. We must be feared, so that they will think twice before opening their mouths.

115. They must understand that there is some sort of cost involved in taking a "controversial" stand--although positions cannot honestly be labeled "controversial" if progressives are unable to mount a meaningful opposition. Perhaps once we are able to mount such an opposition...

116. ..we will be able to take some of the trendiness out of rightist cultural activism, because lukewarm advocates of rightist causes will be forced to actually get their hands dirty. Support of rightist causes will no longer be the path of least resistance.

117. Some Basic Premises

The Movement Must Understand What Motivates Human Beings

We must perform a brutally honest analysis of what motivates human beings. We must understand what makes them tick, whether that motivation is attractive or not.

118. We must channel undesirable impulses to serve good purposes. For example, it is important to emphasize that the alternative counterculture must be just that--alternative. It must be different from anything people are familiar with.

119. It is a basic fact that an us-versus-them, insider-versus-outsider mentality is a very strong motivation in human life. For better or for worse, this has to be recognized and taken advantage of for the good of the movement.

120. Moreover, the New Progressivists must be interested in learning about sociology, social psychology, and the dynamics of social change. We must study examples of dissident and countercultural groups that succeeded in ascending to dominance--we must learn from them.

121. We must recognize the world as it is, not as we may like it to be; but we must never let this line of thinking descend into cynicism.

Good Results More Important than Good Intentions--Naiveté? Not Excusable

We will apply a scientific analysis to every problem.

122. We will be results-oriented rather than good intentions-oriented. Making a good-faith effort and being ideologically sound will be less important than advancing the goals of the movement. We must learn to be more self-critical.

123. Our efforts should be less haphazard, less prone to fits and starts, and they should make better use of accumulated knowledge and past errors.

We must not get hung up on the evils of our opponents. We can only control our own actions and responses.

124. We must stop whining when we see an example of rightist double-standards and hypocrisy and accept reality as it exists. The only question to be asked is, what are we going to do about it? We must learn to change our own thinking and our own behavior.

125. We must always operate based on this cardinal principle: Rightists are never morally responsible for the evil they commit; but we as progressives are morally responsible for not having done more to prevent them from committing that evil.

126. We must learn to treat rightists as natural disasters or rabid dogs. If we act as if this were in fact true (of course, it is not), we will not needlessly expend our energy on being upset with our opponents.

127. This is not to discount the importance of reminding ourselves on a regular basis why we ought to hate rightist ideology, in order to keep ourselves motivated to better fight it. But we must be aware that this is what we are doing as we do it--such propaganda must be seen...

128. ..as a catalyst for action, not a substitute for action. We must always understand exactly why we do what we do as we do it, and why our opponents do what they do. We must stop operating according to self-delusion and wishful thinking.

129. Good intentions and good effort count for nothing.

The new movement must learn never to be satisfied with the way things are. We must ask a long series of "whys" to understand how we arrived at our current condition and what must be done to change it.

130. For example, if a fight is winnable, why have we not won it? If it is not, why are we not diverting our efforts elsewhere?

We must always recognize and anticipate the strategy of our opponents.

131. There is no excuse for ever being surprised by the ferocity or ingenuity of their attacks

One especially naive belief held by most progressives (at least as betrayed by their actions) that seems to have real staying power is that ideas have a way of disseminating themselves

132. In many progressive publications, for example, it is unclear who the intended audience is. Articles tend to cover old ground and rehash old arguments, which is pointless if the intended readership is made up of progressive activists who are already familiar with them.

133. But if the intended audience is made up of people who do not already agree, they most likely will not be reading such a specialized publication, but rather reading a newspaper or watching television news, or more likely, they will not follow public affairs at all.

134. What the activists instead need is a better understanding of how the current situation has arisen and how to coordinate strategy, so they will be prepared to take action in the real world. For instance, they need to know more about the history of the Right than any rightist.

135. They need to be able to beat a rightist in any debate. They need to be able to make him look utterly foolish. They need, in other words, to become hyper-intellectual--this will make them more self-confident, and with self-confidence, they will have the power to prevail.

136. But the progressive movement is not properly preparing its activists to do what needs to be done. They are instead tossing random opinions into the circulation of national discourse, and merely hoping for the best.

137. Support of an Elite More Valuable than Support of the Masses

We will initially operate according to the belief that it is more important to win over the elites (or create a new, better one) than to build up a mass movement. Furthermore, it is more important to have...

138. ..a few impassioned members than a large number of largely indifferent members. The amount of energy, élan, and self-assurance that we are able to inculcate in the leaders of our movement will ultimately determine its success or failure.

139. The new movement must be, in part, exclusive and elite. It must not be afraid to pass along a body of knowledge that is not readily accessible to and understandable by everyone. The strong appeal of a feeling of espirit de corps rooted in an ethic...

140. ..of altruism and excellence will give our members a reason to endure the slings and arrows of popular disapproval.

The New Progressivist movement will appeal to the masses, but not immediately.

141. The ideas of the masses never come from the masses. To the extent that the masses are more progressive than the currently ruling elites, this is primarily because the masses have a long collective memory, and they still value the beliefs articulated...

142. ..by a long-lost progressive elite. The progressive instincts of the American people will continue to erode unless a new elite is formed to refresh that memory.

143. We must recognize that literature and philosophy do not appeal to the masses. This is why we must develop ways to spread our philosophy using non-rational means--especially the moving image.

144. Value of Art and Images

We must place a high value on art, because the most important thing any movement can do is capture the imagination of the people. One must give them dreams and ideals that have been put in terms they can understand, and that touch their hearts...

145. ..as opposed to their rational minds. If we cannot capture the imaginations of our members, then we cannot expect our members to make great sacrifices for us. There must be a common repository of books and movies that everyone in our movement is familiar with...