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Ruling Class War

By DAVID BROOKS

There are two sorts of people in the information-age elite, spreadsheet people and paragraph people. Spreadsheet people work with numbers, wear loafers and support Republicans. Paragraph people work with prose, don't shine their shoes as often as they should and back Democrats.

C.E.O.'s are classic spreadsheet people. According to a sample gathered by PoliticalMoneyLine in July, the number of C.E.O.'s donating funds to Bush's campaign is five times the number donating to Kerry's.

Professors, on the other hand, are classic paragraph people and lean Democratic. Eleven academics gave to the Kerry campaign for every 1 who gave to Bush's. Actors like paragraphs, too, albeit short ones. Almost 18 actors gave to Kerry for every 1 who gave to Bush. For self-described authors, the ratio was about 36 to 1. Among journalists, there were 93 Kerry donors for every Bush donor. For librarians, who must like Faulknerian, sprawling paragraphs, the ratio of Kerry to Bush donations was a whopping 223 to 1.

Laura Bush has a lot of work to do in shoring up her base.

Data from the Center for Responsive Politics allows us to probe the emerging class alignments, but the pattern is the same. Number people and word people are moving apart.

Accountants, whose relationship with numbers verges on the erotic, are now heavily Republican. Back in the early 1990's, accountants gave mostly to Democrats, but now they give twice as much to the party of Lincoln. Similarly, in the early 1990's, bankers gave equally to the two parties. Now they give mostly to Republicans, though one notices that employees at big banks, like Citigroup and Bank of America, are more likely to give to Democrats.

But lawyers - people who didn't realize that they wanted to be novelists until their student loan burdens were already too heavy - are shifting the other way. This year, lawyers gave about \$81 million to Democrats and about \$31 million to Republicans.

Media types are Democratic, of course, but one is dismayed to learn that two-thirds of employee donations at Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation went to Democrats. Whatever happened to company loyalty?

If you look at the big Kerry donors, you realize that the days of the starving intellectual are over. University of California employees make up the single biggest block of Kerry donors and Harvard employees are second, topping folks from Goldman Sachs and others in the supposedly sell-out/big-money professions.

Academics have had such an impact on the Democratic donor base because there is less intellectual diversity in academia than in any other profession. All but 1 percent of the campaign donations made by employees of William & Mary College went to Democrats. In the Harvard crowd, Democrats got 96 percent of the dollars. At M.I.T., it was 94 percent. Yale is a beacon of freethinking by comparison; 8 percent of its employee donations went to Republicans.

It should be noted there are some professions that span the spreadsheet-people/paragraph-people divide. For example, lobbyists give equally to both parties. (Could it possibly be that lobbyists don't have principles?) And casino people split their giving, with employees at Harrah's giving mostly to Democrats and employees at MGM Mirage giving mostly to Republicans.

Why have the class alignments shaken out as they have? There are a couple of theories. First there is the intellectual affiliation theory. Numerate people take comfort in the false clarity that numbers imply, and so also admire Bush's speaking style. Paragraph people, meanwhile, relate to the postmodern, post-Cartesian, deconstructionist, co-directional ambiguity of Kerry's Iraq policy.

I subscribe, however, to the mondo-neo-Marxist theory of information-age class conflict. According to this view, people who majored in liberal arts subjects like English and history naturally loathe people who majored in econ, business and the

other "hard" fields. This loathing turns political in adult life and explains just about everything you need to know about political conflict today.

It should be added that not everybody fits predictably into the political camp indicated by a profession. I myself am thinking of founding the Class Traitors Association, made up of conservative writers, liberal accountants and other people so filled with self-loathing that they ally politically with social and cultural rivals.

Class traitors of the word, Unite! You have nothing to lose but your friends - and a world to gain!