

The Primal Termites of Project 2025

“We want the bureaucrats to be traumatically affected. When they wake up in the morning, we want them to not want to go to work because they are increasingly viewed as the villains... We want to put them in trauma.”

Russell Vought, Trump’s Director of the Office of Management and Budget

It’s overly-easy to stigmatize government workers as being “bureaucrats” whose work is riddled with “fraud, waste, and abuse” (“I’m from the government and I’m here to help.”) It is also grossly inaccurate and unfair. In his book *The Fifth Risk: Undoing Democracy* Michael Lewis writes: “People who go to work in government each day are not the lazy bureaucrats of cliché. They are some of the most mission-driven people you will ever meet, quietly serving the public good without recognition.”

The “villains” Russell Vought wants to be so traumatized they can’t get out of bed in the morning work in departments like Veterans Health Affairs, Social Security Administration, Health and Human Services, Department of Labor, Federal Emergency Management Agency, Small Business Administration, AmeriCorps, Department of Agriculture, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Science Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency, NASA, National Institute of Mental Health, not to mention the “bureaucrats” who serve in the governments of your state and your community.

No matter who you are or what you do, you are more dependent upon the dedication and hard work of these people than you know. Again quoting Lewis: “The United States government is the world’s largest and most complicated organization, and the people who work in it know things that no one else knows. If their knowledge is lost or ignored, we will be blind to the risks we are running.”

The demolition crew that Donald Trump and his co-conspirators from Project 2025 have unleashed upon our government is like an infestation of termites. The damage they inflict will be slow and insidious.

The pain will be felt slowly and incrementally as government services gradually deteriorate.

Some of us have already experienced that deterioration as we try to reach a live person at the Social Security office or get a covid vaccine booster or get help with filling out a tax return.

But as with termites undermining the foundation of a building, the real impact will come suddenly, devastatingly, and with little warning when the infrastructure collapses at some point down the road.

In his poetry collection *Good Intentions* Ogden Nash included this short poem:

The Termite

Some primal termite knocked on wood
And tasted it, and found it good!
And that is why your Cousin May
Fell through the parlor floor today.

When the primal termites of Project 2025 have finished with their eviction of “he “villainous bureaucrats” they accuse of “fraud, waste, and abuse” and their destruction of governmental agencies they would rather see privatized to be run by their buddies in corporate America, we might find that we are joining Cousin May down in the basement.