

Whither the Sprawl People?

“Where Democrats Can Build a Majority . . .” by John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, and “The Brawl in the Sprawl” by David Brooks, in *Blueprint Magazine* (Sept. 27, 2002), 600 Pennsylvania Ave., S.E., Ste. 400, Washington, D.C. 20003.

The last presidential election left the electoral map of the United States an intriguing patchwork of the red (Republican) and the blue (Democratic). It also left political soothsayers busily searching for portents of its future color scheme. *Blue* eventually, forecast Judis and Teixeira, coauthors of *The Emerging Democratic Majority* (2002). *Red*, predicts Brooks, a senior editor at *The Weekly Standard*.

Despite the Republican successes last November, the Democrats stand to benefit from the spread of the postindustrial economy, in which “the production of ideas and services” looms large, argue Judis and Teixeira. “The Solid South [red in 2000] is unlikely to remain solid; some of the mountain and Midwestern states that are red are likely to go blue; and the blue states that Al Gore carried by small margins in 2000 are likely to get harder, not easier, for the Republicans to pick off.”

The bluish new politics, according to their analysis, is being shaped by the growth of “ideopolises”—metropolitan areas in which the suburbs have become more urbanized. No longer merely bedroom communities, such suburbs provide professional, technical, and service jobs for an ethnically and racially diverse work force, and have become “extensions of the city.”

“The politics of these ideopolises emphasizes tolerance and openness,” write Judis and Teixeira. “It is defined by the professionals, many of whom were deeply shaped by the social movements of the ‘60s.” In Boston, San Francisco, and some other postindustrial metropolises, a fourth of the jobs are held by professionals and technicians. Many ideopolises are in the North and West, Judis and Teixeira say, “but they are also in states like Florida and Virginia. Republicans are strongest in areas where the transition to postindustrial society has lagged,” especially

in the Deep South and the prairie states.

Brooks has a different demographic vision: “The most important political divide in the coming decades . . . will be between . . . inner suburbs, which have large numbers of people at the top and the bottom of the income scale and are hence Democratic, and the faster-growing outer suburbs, which have greater similarity of incomes and are hence Republican.”

“The suburbs around Atlanta now sprawl for hundreds of miles,” Brooks points out. “In a few decades the greater Phoenix area will have almost 10 million people; it will be a more significant city than Chicago. Already, Mesa, Arizona, has a larger population than



St. Louis, Cincinnati, or Minneapolis.”

The folks who live and work in the sprawl areas have no “regular contact with urban life,” Brooks says. They have an emerging culture of their own. Neither red nor blue, “this new tribe is . . . a mix—a purple America. These are . . . the swing voters who will shape the destinies of both parties.” Though they are largely apolitical now, says Brooks, their moderately conservative values—stressing order, responsibility, success, and sports—are in harmony with George W. Bush’s. As the booming new suburbs develop, the purple “sprawl people” are likely to become redder, in his view. “I’d bet that the emerging majority is a Republican one—or at least that it can be.”