



Are the parties in the United States still vehicles for environmental politics? How do they occupy this political field, and what ideological and sociological aspects affect this process?

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Seminar paper from the year 2005 in the subject American Studies - Culture and Applied Geography, grade: 1,7, University of Potsdam (Wirtschafts- und Sozialwissenschaftliche Fakultät), course: Proseminar Politik und Gesellschaft in den USA, 11 entries in the bibliography, language: English, abstract: „There is nothing so American as our national parks. The scenery and wildlife are native. The fundamental idea behind the parks is native. The parks stand as an outward symbol of this great human principle”. These sentences are not extracted from the platform of the American Green Party – they are from a quote of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the 32nd President of the United States, a Republican. In his thinking, “conservation was closely tied to American Values” (Sussman/ Daynes/ West 2001: 169). During his governing period, environmental care was directly incorporated in governmental action – various agencies and bureaucracies were established to deal with this topic.

Today, the United States reject major international environmental treaties such as the Kyoto Protocol, requiring participants to reduce green house gases below the 1990 level by 2012. The Bush administration has presented plans to drill for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, a swathe of land in northeast Alaska, populated by migratory birds, wolves and caribou. The House of Representatives had already approved these plans, the Senate rejected them. In voting George W. Bush their 43rd President, a majority of the American people made their cross for a candidate with a green record tending to zero.

But not only does environmental policy seem to have left the political agenda on a larger scale, observers more and more get the impression that the American people seem to care lesser for environmental aspects than ten or twenty years ago – only considering, among many other factors, the increasing number of polluting light trucks and SUVs on American roads. So can we conclude that, considering the fact that the parties fight for the support of the American mainstream, both Democrats and Republicans have banned environmental politics from their platforms?

This paper is to figure out to what extent the field of environmental policy still is a factor in the American political landscape and what ideological and sociological factors are at play in this process and in the party-internal treatment of the topic.

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