

Of the UN and Campaign Finance Reform

When in the course of human events . . .

First rule of military discipline: Never volunteer. In a rare moment of utter abandon I recently volunteered to write a few words for a Democratic newsletter. This proves a more difficult task than anticipated.

Our elders came of age and political awareness under the heavy, intentionally intimidating gavel of Wisconsin's own Joe McCarthy. He taught all of that era to keep opinions private, to speak in public of sports and vehicle maintenance, but to never ever stray into the minefield of political discourse.

And for those of younger generations who still need a reminder that the more things change the more they stay the same, who still need a warning to just shut up, and attend quietly and subserviently to only one's immediate concerns, Attorney General John Ashcroft not long ago draped bare-breasted Justice in his own prayer shawl embroidered with the McCarthy tribute, "People must watch what they say."

To volunteer to write of anything political after a lifetime trained to silence is one thing. To actually set down words which will then be entered more or less directly into Patriot Act files requires a bit more resolve.

Citizens are routinely discouraged from articulating independent viewpoints, discouraged from even formulating such viewpoints, discouraged from weighing the factors that must be considered in order to make an evaluation and judgment which would demand action, often in opposition not only to their own trained quiescence, but also in opposition to those political powers which profit enormously from the useful passivity of the populace.

This drive is not unique to the US in 2005, nor in our first two centuries. Throughout humankind's evolution as political animals the dominant have always intuited that the more power they accumulate the more power they can accumulate. Fundamental to this power grab is that competitors be deprived of power - power over their own thoughts, voices, actions, lives, environments and futures.

"Are you now or have you ever been . . .?"

That is why, in a group of fifty or five hundred or five thousand, only one, immediately designated Fool might raise a hand to volunteer to write of such things for public consumption.

Originally, I intended to write only in defense of the United Nations, to dispel its imagined threat of “one-world-government” as raised by the Armageddon cult among us.

At that moment, Minnesota Senator Norm Coleman, our favorite flip-flopping opportunist, was making headlines by denouncing Kofi Annan and the United Nations for scandals in the administration of the oil-for-food program in Iraq under Hussein.

Norm in his ever-strident commentary failed to note that US representatives were party to and therefore culpable in every transaction negotiated by the program. Norm failed to note that the UN does nothing without US approval, that any fair and balanced critique of the UN must always lead directly to policies of the US administration.

As Norm’s spittle spattered the TV camera lens, I heard no contrasting defense of the UN. I thought someone should write a few words about the good the UN has done over the years - when permitted to do so by the US and the four other permanent members of the Security Council. I thought someone should note the UN’s role as a forum - admittedly imperfect, yet the best currently available - for the inarticulate, under-represented peoples of the world to present their cases before a world body which might, so informed, be willing and able to take action on their behalf.

Later, Norm absent for a moment from his photo-op spotlight, all realize the performance was staged to grease the slide for UN critic John “Basher” Bolton to assume his antagonistic posture there - without consent of citizens or Senate (see p.8) - but that’s gruel for another day.

Books on the shelf here:

“How Democracies Perish” by J. F. Revel

“The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy” by Christopher Lasch

“Silent Takeover - Global Capitalism and the Death of Democracy” by Noreena Hertz

“Don’t Think of an Elephant” by George Lakoff

Witness the rise of multinational corporations, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank, the current round of race-to-the-bottom NAFTA-CAFTA negotiations, the G8 conference with its facade of world leaders concealing the machinations of a broader band of largely anonymous and inaccessible business tycoons with no allegiance whatsoever to any nation state but only to their own stockholders and quarterly bottom lines.

Witness the rise of across-the-border *maquilladoras*, of formerly US-based companies moving factory production to China, then on to remote Malaysia, seeking always minimum wages, diminished benefits, reduced environmental supervision. Witness the rise of phantom corporate box offices in the Bahamas and Grand Caymans, witness the pharmaceutical companies routinely reporting higher profits from sales abroad than in the US, witness the off-shoring of every possible

American job to foreign havens of lower obligation and higher profit. Witness, over the past forty years, the decline in corporate tax funding of the US economy, even as their US-based subsidies and profits increase.

Corporations seek power, ever and always more power; it's the nature of the beast.

Which of them has ever asked you what you want?¹

Which, even in their most polished PR propaganda, has ever appeared to care?

To them the citizen as voter is meaningless, save as impediment to their rampant global growth.

To multinationals, the people of any nation are at best labor or consumer, meat or market, no third choice, no question of representation, no rights whatsoever to any claim against injustice, inequality, political thuggery, destruction of the environment, mercury in a newborn's bloodstream, or any other assault on the human community which one might correct in a responsive representative democracy but never in a multinational corporate boardroom.

Democratic governments have an annoying tendency to occasionally demand that corporations be responsible in some way to and for the citizens of the nation, either for the lungs of their miners, or for the education of their minors, or for other such bleeding-heart nonsense that profits shareholders not one cent.

"Government is the problem," rail corporate shills, until the lie is beaten into the mind of the college graduate driving taxi cab, into the heart of the dis-employed steel worker now chucking burgers at one-fourth his union wage, into the soul of the divorcee waitress whose marriage fell apart because their two salaries could not hold a home together in today's cut-throat economy.

But government is not the problem. In fact, done right, government is the answer.

The "one-world-government" feared by the Armageddon cult is already here. The Beast is already clawing at every human back as corporate dominance of all exploitable features of planet Earth.

¹ Last November 2nd on my way to vote for either Bush or Bush-Lite Kerry, both strictly conformist corporate caricatures of presidency, I stopped at the market to buy bath soap, ever vigilant against being detected as one of the Great Unwashed. In the same nation where I had practically to select one of two hair-splitting Eastern establishment Yale clones, I had of bath soaps *one hundred eight* products to choose among.

Who to a limited degree balances and therefore threatens the power of this Hydra-headed corporate monster? Who speaks for the disenfranchised of the world, for those who suffer first, last and always in the proud predatory blood-sport of survival-of-the-fittest, winner-take-all, masters-of-the-universe corporatism?

As imperfectly permitted by its administrators, the United Nations today provides an alternate forum - an exercise in democracy, an ever-evolving attempt of the world's citizens for representation in a council open to all.

For a few other nations, pontificators of the current US administration hype a product they label "democracy", curiously selective about which countries are thus targeted, ever imperious about the constraints to be imposed upon any US-supervised use of the product "democracy."

Never offering a concrete working definition of "democracy," they abuse and defile the term as often as they speak it, except as codeword meaning "unrestricted access to materials and markets."

Who advocates for true democracy? Who advocates for the UN, *or for any other forum*, as an egalitarian venue to weigh the claims of the many against the power of the few? Will Norm Coleman ever champion "the informed consent of the governed?" Will John Bolton ever lobby to strengthen UN peace-keeping capabilities? Will George II ever initiate a vast increase in US contributions to the UN? Will the heads of Halliburton, Exxon-Mobil, or Pfizer ever advocate any global life-enhancing reform which might diminish return on investment?

"My ideal citizen," says corporate lobbyist and anti-government grenade Grover Norquist, "is the self-employed, home-schooling, IRA-owning guy with a concealed-carry permit." This ideal hearkens back to a frontier fiction perhaps more useless even then than now, as any pioneer community knows by practice if not by instinct that the efforts of all are required for the survival of all.

Grover's invocation of such a fiction promotes a darker aspiration. If, as global corporations gain power, citizens are simultaneously discouraged from working together for the good of all against the corporate juggernaut, corporations gain still more power.

Their goal might be not to return to the pre-Roosevelt era of robber barons, private strike-breaking armies and legalized child labor, but to drive the US into a new Dark Age of total corporate power with *zero* responsibility, toward the elimination of any government as mediator of their power, toward the destruction of even the concept of citizen as claimant to justice, equality or any other such democratic value not contributing to corporate profit margins.

The desecration of the UN is but one front in the corporate war against any nation and its citizenry. Thus, in stumbling from one paragraph to the next, this essay-turned-rant, begun in defense of the UN, discovers a different core issue.

George Lakoff speaks of “strategic initiatives” (Don’t Think of an Elephant - p.29). Which is the strategic initiative - the core issue - that must be addressed in order to affect a range of other issues? Which is the core issue that must be addressed so all other efforts are not merely shoveling sand from the beach, or, in present company, elephant dung from the halls of Congress?

How, Lakoff might ask, shall we restore our government of, by, for and to the people?

Which statesman of any party or political stripe can afford to honor such an antiquated ideal as he tallies campaign-fund contributions from wealthy profiteers lightly concealed behind well-organized and perfectly-focused special-interest political action groups?

The disease upon which consideration of the UN founders, upon which a vast range of issues of concern to Democrats, democrats and Americans founder, is corporate control of the body politic.

The *strategic initiative* target - the issue which must be addressed in order to allow solution of any other - is the liberation of the US body politic from its addiction to corporate heroin.

The first step of course toward any such liberation requires that addicts admit and confront their own addiction.

“In a pig’s eye!” swells the chorus from the halls of Congress.

With effective treatment, the recovery rate for cocaine addiction runs about seventy percent, for meth addiction not ten percent. For politicians addicted to corporate funding: No known recoveries, except for the independently wealthy.

“This then, my fellow Democrats, my fellow democrats, my fellow Americans,” risking a bad imitation of LBJ as Mission Impossible’s Michael Graves, “is your assignment, should you choose to accept it.”

☞ Free our elected representatives from their addiction to corporate heroin.

☞ *Comprehensive campaign finance reform.* Public funding only of all campaigns.²

☞ Charge corporate corruption of elections or the elected as treason, as subversion of the one-person one-vote covenant fundamental to a democracy representative of its citizens.

If democracy can be bought, it’s not democracy.

Check with Mr. Lakoff on how to frame this as a “strategic initiative.”

² For more on campaign finance reform, begin with *wisconsin-democracyproject.org*, *commoncause.org* and Senator Feingold’s *progressivepatriots.org*.

Reform and resolve the issue of campaign finance. Flush corporate heroin from the body politic. Reclaim America's government for Americans by their true representatives rather than by corporate-funded junkies.

Any subsequent reform will become easy by comparison once the dependence of our elected representatives on corporate funding is ended.

Consider again the UN, or the contribution and sustenance of unions, or healthcare reform, Social Security stabilization, the social fabric of the nation, all the infrastructure of the commonwealth, any number of other issues constantly churning in the cauldrons of Congress. Without *comprehensive campaign finance reform*, perhaps none of these other issues will ever reach a secure resolution of equal value to all Americans.

Such a logical and obvious conclusion arrives late on a rough street to do battle against a culture of drug-pushers - the corporations themselves - who have developed their justification for their corruption of political consciousness into a well-funded and by now deeply-rooted ideology which pervades the entire US community.

This conclusion also arrives late and haltingly at the well-spoken and fully-documented positions of Jesus³, Chomsky, Nader, Kucinich, Feingold-McCain, et al. - all of whom have been excluded from the increasingly secret chambers wherein such decisions are currently made, to be imposed upon a diminished citizenry at the discretion of the corporate-political administrators of "democracy" as they deem appropriate to first preserve their own power and as a distant second to permit a token election every few years so long as only one-third of the eligible populace vote in any case, and results are now secured by Diebold.

"Bill of Rights, anyone?! Get 'em before they're all gone."

Second rule of military discipline: Never voice an opinion until you know that of your superiors. Might as well break two in a row. Hair turning grey, I now understand that babies are born somewhere between cabbage leaves and ovaries. But I still don't know how Democratic Party policies are generated. Maybe it starts like this.

How shall we reclaim, resurrect, revitalize, reestablish democracy of, by and for the *demos*, the citizens of the USA?

³ "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18:6

And good night, Julia, wherever you are . . .

- Winston Smith - 2005.08.10 WED

BUSH DICTATES - WITHOUT CONSENT OF CITIZENS OR SENATE - JOHN “BASHER” BOLTON AS U.S. REP TO U.N.

“It’s *my* planet,” smirks Cheney’s boy George, “Don’t like it? Leave!”

As immediate salvation from this embarrassment we hereby nominate to the position of US ambassador to the UN the honorable Bill Cosby.

STEP 1 - Find your federal representatives at www.firstgov.gov or at 800-333-4636.

STEP 2 - Send this page to each by any or all means available. With copies also to Senators Christopher **Dodd** - D - CT, Edward **Kennedy** - D - MA, Frank **Lautenberg** - D - NJ, Richard **Lugar** - R - IN, Harry **Reid** - D - NV, George **Voinovich** - R - OH.

STEP 3 - Add your own commentary.