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U.S.A., Inc.

"Like any corporation, the United States chooses profit over humanity. But the United States is unique in that it operates less like Unocal or Halliburton and more like the mafia, complete with "hits" upon any competitors which might threaten the existing order ("nothing personal, just business"). But even the most violently diabolical members of organized crime can only drool with envy at the military might the U.S.A., Inc. has at its disposal to enforce its will upon the world."

Jeremy R. Hammond

02/17/05 "Information Clearing House" - - The corporation is, by nature, an exploitative entity. I've pointed this out in conversation only to have the notion summarily rejected, the defense being that this corporation or that corporation is not exploitative, so the hypothesis must therefore be false. The fallacy should be obvious enough, however, to the careful observer. The hypothesis is not that all corporations are exploitative, but that the corporation is exploitative. Nor is the former a corollary of the latter.

As self-evident as it may seem to some, there are others who might consider the statement to be "liberal" rhetoric emanating from the margins of society, and who therefore require some demonstration of its accuracy should they be expected to take the hypothesis seriously.

To do so is a laborless enough task. One need merely point out that corporations, by law, are required to maximize profits for their shareholders. Thus, when any conflict of interest arises, the corporation will inevitably choose to do that which brings in more mammon, rather than that which serves the public interest. It should come as no surprise, then, that exploitation occurs as a result.

Take the environment. This is perhaps the most obvious area in which corporations are exploitative, and even those who would deny the hypothesis would be reluctant to assert that corporations are not naturally exploitative of the environment. Given the choice between doing what's right for the environment (such as, say, not polluting), and making a profit, the route the corporation will take is no great

secret.

Fortunately, there are times when the law of the corporation which demands profits for its shareholders may be trumped by other public laws, such as those which seek to preserve the delicate balance of the natural world in which we live. Thus, the corporation, given the choice, will always exploit the environment for profit unless there is some act of legislation preventing it from doing so. Naturally, therefore, when deregulation occurs, increased exploitation results.

Or take wages of labor, a matter in which, to provide evidence for the hypothesis, I will defer to a higher authority. “The workmen,” wrote Adam Smith, “desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labour... But whoever imagines, upon this account, that masters rarely combine, is as ignorant of the world as of the subject. Masters are always and every where in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labour above their actual state.”

Furthermore, “Whenever the legislature attempts to regulate the differences between masters and their workmen,” Smith also noted, “its counselors are always the masters. When the regulation, therefore, is in favour of the workmen, it is always just and equitable; but it is sometimes otherwise when in favour of the masters.”

Tacit conspiracies to depress wages of labor – what any laborer, at least, would describe as exploitation – are not the only conspiracies in which corporations engage. “People of the same trade seldom meet together,” Smith wrote, “even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices.”

I will add one final observation from the renowned economist: “The monopolists, by keeping the market constantly understocked, by never fully supplying the effectual demand, sell their commodities much above the natural price, and raise their emoluments, whether they consist in wages or profit, greatly above their natural rate.”

I submit these observations of the nature of corporations by this competent authority as evidence of their exploitative nature. It should be noted, however, that the absence of any sort of conflict of interest for any particular corporation will naturally mean no exploitation occurs. It is where such a conflict of interest occurs that it is in the nature of the corporation to choose the more exploitative of routes.

It might be prudent to include a few specific examples of exploitation which exist today as a result of corporations’ inability to rise above their nature. The

outsourcing of U.S. jobs to foreign countries is one example of particular concern in recent years. Not only does this represent what the American labor force views as a betrayal, but it also results in the exploitation of foreign labor forces.

To the corporation, what matters is the numbers, and the fact that they can pay someone in a third-world country a tiny fraction of what they would have to pay an American worker to accomplish the same job. As Smith observed, one method of maintaining profits is by depressing wages. It being the nature of the corporation to maximize profit, it should come as no great surprise that it will view the opportunity to replace a labor force receiving reasonable wages with one receiving barely enough to provide food on the table, a roof over a few heads, and modest coverings for a few naked bodies – or less – with great enthusiasm. Humanity is simply not a variable in the equation.

Some might argue that this is not exploitation since it provides foreign laborers with jobs they might otherwise not have. But this argument fails to take into account other natural factors, such as the lack of regulation in foreign countries that are under more despotic rule than our own. It ignores such matters as that of children laboring fourteen hours a day in sweatshops. It is precisely by abusing the rights of the laborer, accommodated by the lack of legislation enforcing the protection of such rights, that the corporation is able to pay such low wages. Attempting to paint such exploitation in the color of benevolence is nothing more than an act of denial on the part of corporate apologists.

Corporations are also more than happy to take advantage of lax environmental regulations in foreign countries. Thus, corporations which might be required by law in our nation to take measures to protect the environment can operate in other countries without concern over investing in such protective measures. Why pollute our country when we can pollute somebody else's at a fraction of the cost?

Another aspect of corporate exploitation is the willingness to collude with despotic regimes. Corporations' willingness to support tyrants for mutual profit is another common theme in exploitation regularly ignored by the apologists of what has been dubbed "globalization".

But besides being exploitative in nature, there are other disturbing features of the corporation, such as their designation as legal "persons". By defining "corporations" as legal "persons", they can legally claim the same "privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States" referred to in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution.

The traditional explanation for that amendment is that it recognized the rights of blacks. Under this interpretation, it can be argued that corporations can claim to have "rights" such as those protected by the first ten amendments – an implication

with dangerous enough consequences.

But the amendment nowhere mentions “rights”, only “privileges”. It speaks of “persons” who are “subject to” the United States government. This language should be enough to cause any true republican to raise an eyebrow.

First, there is a fundamental difference between “rights” and “privileges”. Rights, as defined by the Declaration of Independence, are God-given and inalienable. Privileges, on the other hand, are granted by one man to his fellow man and are quite alienable. The founding documents established a republican form of government for the union of States that is subject to the people. We the People, with God-given inalienable rights, established a government subject to our authority and granted it certain privileges.

Suddenly, with the 14th amendment, a different form of government was described. In this form of government, the people are subject to the government, rather than vice versa. In this form of government, the people are granted privileges from the government, rather than vice versa. In short, whereas the Constitution established a republic, the 14th amendment described a democracy.

For all the talk these days about “democracy”, one might never guess that the founding fathers despised that form of government. A democracy, they recognized, is mob rule. It’s two wolves and a sheep voting on what’s for dinner, to borrow the analogy. In a republic, on the other hand, one man and the law is a sovereign in an impenetrable fortress. A democracy grants privileges, a republic recognizes rights. There is, in short, all the difference in the world between a republic and a democracy.

What is certain is that the 14th amendment created a new class of citizens. What exactly this new class of citizens is, however, is slightly more ambiguous. It is commonly taught that this new citizenry was the black population, which was raised to the level of white citizenry. In reality, if one may accurately judge from the language, what occurred is that the status of the entire population was lowered from being citizens of a republic to being citizens of a democracy, and from having God-given inalienable rights to having government-granted privileges.

Understood in either context, the consequences of the legal designation of corporations as “persons” is essentially the same. In either interpretation, it means that corporate entities have equal standing under the law as individual citizens, something that should be considered neither appropriate nor desirable. Corporations should rightfully be bound by stricter regulations than those which govern individuals in their relations with one another.

It is not that the corporation has been given the same status as sovereign citizens of

the republic, but that the republic has been replaced with a democracy and every citizen denigrated to the level of the corporation; while the regulations governing corporations have not been met with any similar denigration. The end result is that, whichever paradigm one chooses to live by, corporations have more power and influence in society than should exist in a just and equitable society.

And thus it is that we have come to be regulated by commercial law, rather than by common law; by the law of the sea rather than by the law of the land. We have all become corporate entities, having surrendered our republic in favor of democracy, our rights in favor of privileges, and our sovereignty in favor of servitude by some other name. We have entered the rabbit hole of legalism, where nothing is as it seems; or the matrix, if you prefer, designed to give the appearance of freedom but lacking its most fundamental and essential characteristics.

And so it is that “United States” has come to be defined as “a Federal Corporation” (Title 28, VI, Chapter 176, Subchapter A, Section 3002) with all the implications of that designation. Our nation has come to be the most exploitative upon the face of the earth. Only a great act of self-delusion could prompt one to assert any differently in the face of the supporting evidence.

Like any corporation, the United States chooses profit over humanity. But the United States is unique in that it operates less like Unocal or Halliburton and more like the mafia, complete with “hits” upon any competitors which might threaten the existing order (“nothing personal, just business”). But even the most violently diabolical members of organized crime can only drool with envy at the military might the U.S.A., Inc. has at its disposal to enforce its will upon the world.

And the U.S. is not afraid of using this might, as it is only too eager to demonstrate, in order to advance its agenda of domination, particularly, if recent history is any judge, with regard to the natural resources of the Middle East. Apologists for U.S. aggression commonly charge its critics with being “anti-American”. These apologists rightfully recognize that being “American” means sharing in the beliefs and principles laid out by the founding fathers in the founding documents, but fail to recognize that, by this very definition of the word, it is our government itself which is violently “anti-American”.

The problem of exploitation runs thick in the heart of our nation today. The nature of corporations can only be overcome by enforceable regulations which protect the rights of individuals. So long as we have a government that is more protective of corporations, however, than of individuals, exploitation will continue to increase until the remains of our republic are swept into the dustbins of history. If this is not the future we desire for ourselves, then it's time to restore the republic, and to take back the reins of government from those who have usurped it.

For those who would insist that this is anti-American-speak, I submit the following evidence to the contrary:

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, --That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shewn, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”

You just can't get much more American than that.

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