

Impeachment by the People

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Poor Best

Tuesday, 30 January 2007



By Howard Zinn

Courage is in short supply in Washington, D.C. The realities of the Iraq War cry out for the overthrow of a government that is criminally responsible for death, mutilation, torture, humiliation, chaos. But all we hear in the nation's capital, which is the source of those catastrophes, is a whimper from the Democratic Party, muttering and nattering about "unity" and "bipartisanship," in a situation that calls for bold action to immediately reverse the present course.

01/30/07 "Progressive" -- -- These are the Democrats who were brought to power in November by an electorate fed up with the war, furious at the Bush Administration, and counting on the new majority in Congress to represent the voters. But if sanity is to be restored in our national policies, it can only come about by a great popular upheaval, pushing both Republicans and Democrats into compliance with the national will.

The Declaration of Independence, revered as a document but ignored as a guide to action, needs to be read from pulpits and podiums, on street corners and community radio stations throughout the nation. Its words, forgotten for over two centuries, need to become a call to action for the first time since it was read aloud to crowds in the early excited days of the American Revolution: "Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it and institute new government."

The "ends" referred to in the Declaration are the equal right of all to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." True, no government in the history of the nation has been faithful to those ends. Favors for the rich, neglect of the poor, massive violence in the interest of continental and world expansion—that is the persistent record of our government.

Still, there seems to be a special viciousness that accompanies the current assault on human rights, in this country and in the world. We have had repressive governments before, but none has legislated the end of habeas corpus, nor openly supported torture, nor declared the possibility of war without end. No

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government has so casually ignored the will of the people, affirmed the right of the President to ignore the Constitution, even to set aside laws passed by Congress.

The time is right, then, for a national campaign calling for the impeachment of President Bush and Vice President Cheney. Representative John Conyers, who held extensive hearings and introduced an impeachment resolution when the Republicans controlled Congress, is now head of the House Judiciary Committee and in a position to fight for such a resolution. He has apparently been silenced by his Democratic colleagues who throw out as nuggets of wisdom the usual political palaver about "realism" (while ignoring the realities staring them in the face) and politics being "the art of the possible" (while setting limits on what is possible).

I know I'm not the first to talk about impeachment. Indeed, judging by the public opinion polls, there are millions of Americans, indeed a majority of those polled, who declare themselves in favor if it is shown that the President lied us into war (a fact that is not debatable). There are at least a half-dozen books out on impeachment, and it's been argued for eloquently by some of our finest journalists, John Nichols and Lewis Lapham among them. Indeed, an actual "indictment" has been drawn up by a former federal prosecutor, Elizabeth de la Vega, in a new book called *United States v. George W. Bush et al*, making a case, in devastating detail, to a fictional grand jury.

There is a logical next step in this development of an impeachment movement: the convening of "people's impeachment hearings" all over the country. This is especially important given the timidity of the Democratic Party. Such hearings would bypass Congress, which is not representing the will of the people, and would constitute an inspiring example of grassroots democracy.

These hearings would be the contemporary equivalents of the unofficial gatherings that marked the resistance to the British Crown in the years leading up to the American Revolution. The story of the American Revolution is usually built around Lexington and Concord, around the battles and the Founding Fathers. What is forgotten is that the American colonists, unable to count on redress of their grievances from the official bodies of government, took matters into their own hands, even before the first battles of the Revolutionary War.

In 1772, town meetings in Massachusetts began setting up Committees of Correspondence, and the following year, such a committee was set up in Virginia. The first Continental Congress, beginning to meet in 1774, was a recognition that an extralegal body was necessary to represent the interests of the people. In 1774 and 1775, all through the colonies, parallel institutions were set up outside the official governmental bodies.

Throughout the nation's history, the failure of government to deliver justice has led to the establishment of grassroots organizations, often ad hoc, dissolving after their purpose was fulfilled. For instance, after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act, knowing that the national government could not be counted on to repeal the act, black and white anti-slavery groups organized to nullify the law by acts of civil disobedience. They held meetings, made plans, and set about rescuing escaped slaves who were in danger of being returned to their masters.

In the desperate economic conditions of 1933 and 1934, before the Roosevelt Administration was doing anything to help people in distress, local groups were formed all over the country to demand government action. Unemployed Councils came into being, tenants' groups fought evictions, and hundreds of thousands of people in the country formed self-help organizations to exchange goods and services and enable people to survive.

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More recently, we recall the peace groups of the 1980s, which sprang up in hundreds of communities all over the country, and provoked city councils and state legislatures to pass resolutions in favor of a freeze on nuclear weapons. And local organizations have succeeded in getting more than 400 city councils to take a stand against the Patriot Act.

Impeachment hearings all over the country could excite and energize the peace movement. They would make headlines, and could push reluctant members of Congress in both parties to do what the Constitution provides for and what the present circumstances demand: the impeachment and removal from office of George Bush and Dick Cheney. Simply raising the issue in hundreds of communities and Congressional districts would have a healthy effect, and would be a sign that democracy, despite all attempts to destroy it in this era of war, is still alive.

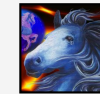
Howard Zinn is the author, most recently, of "A Power Governments Cannot Suppress For information on how to get involved in the impeachment effort, go to www.afterdowningstreet.org [1].

Comments (9)



Arvy: In medieval times, ...

... the military referred to it as the 'forelorn hope' tactic. If your unit is a 'forelorn hope' and has a poor chance of winning anyway, you might as well give them a speech and try to get them worked up into a frenzied charge.



Good luck, but I'm not optimistic that the Bush-Cheney cabal will ever face any form of justice, not even for their domestic outrages, let alone for their crimes against "un-American" humanity.

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January 30, 2007

a guest: Impeachment Hearings

Ok idea, Prof. Zinn. Now, we need people to organize them. Organize and build locally, but be quick about it.



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January 30, 2007

Robert B. Livingston: ...

Dave Lindorff and Barbara Olshansky have one of the best books on Impeachment: "The Case for Impeachment."



An immediate bestseller when it came out, the book curiously received little or no attention from those one would think could have reviewed or applauded it (just as Cynthia McKinney received no attention and was marginalized, just as John Conyers was and is-- how can one forget Conyers with Cindy Sheehan, Ray McGovern and others forced to meet in a Capitol basement like outlaws?).

Those that actually control the Democratic Party (and seem most excited about the prospect of a future President Clinton) have done this nation a great disservice. They are, along with the ones they abet in their criminal deeds, the true outlaws.

While they may preach reform, or even knock about the idea of impeachment with euphemisms on the margins to keep us repeating "don't pay attention to what they do now... just wait until later!"--

those traitors haven't yet risen above trivial cant to actually implement what the Constitution required them to already do.

All sacrificed the long term because they had bigger fish to fry-- whether it be issues from prescription drug prices even on up to media reform. The clearest indication of their complicity in crime is the fog on their glasses regarding 9/11.

People are killing and being killed even as I write this sentence, ladies and gentlemen. Too, our rights literally hang on our trust that our leaders will do what is best for us. That is not good enough.

Erich Fromm was a proponent of ascertaining character behind fancy words, assurances, and easy smiles. Save for a few seers on the street, and some pushed off to eddies on the Internet, why are so few people today capable of seeing through the hollow talk and deeds that are lauded elsewhere high and low?

I am in despair because I doubt the Democratic Party and its henchmen can ever do the right thing. They will certainly not allow other parties to compete against it. It is appalling that so many who should know better trade their integrity for access by putting trust in them.

I find myself wishing that my passport was current-- and wondering if there is anywhere to go.

Unless a miracle happens, the desert will beckon, else the alternative: a spiritual desert--

which is unacceptable.

January 30, 2007

a guest: Reply to R. Livingston

I agree with you 100% with your comments on impeachment and also your comment on 9/11.



On Impeachment: Pelosi took impeachment straight off the table before the congressional session even began. What a strange move? Her fellow party member, Pres. Clinton, was impeached for a blowjob yet she gives a war criminal, traitor president a free pass. Excuse me. To me, this also served to give Bush a free pass for the next 2 years. Bush cannot be reelected, and as his second term gets increasingly shorter, the need for impeachment theoretically diminishes. There was obviously some sort of secret political deal made here.

On 9/11: I have been active in researching this topic, and also noticed calculated behavior by Pelosi & Co. If you research the net and have one bit of common sense, the fact 9/11 was an inside job is obvious. One of the most blatant cover-ups was the whitewash 911 Commission. Just having an investigation on 9/11 was fiercely contested by Bush/Cheney, even made calls to Daschle to prevent it. Then, they crippled the effort once forced to have an investigation: underfunded the commission, set a short suspense to complete the study, and worst of all, they rigged the committee with cronies such as Zelikow. The 9/11 Truth Movement has debunked this sham report 10 times over. Yet, what is the FIRST thing Pelosi does in the new congressional session? She creates 6 House Resolutions (HRs) to implement in the famed First 100 Hours. Common knowledge. But what was the VERY FIRST HR? Implement 9/11 Commission recommendations. Whoa! The very first thing, REPEAT THE VERY FIRST THING, on this Congress' agenda was to implement a SHAM REPORT. Boy, if this

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doesn't send a message to the 9/11 Movement, I don't know what does. Amazingly, the major 9/11 Truth players are asleep at the wheel on this.

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January 30, 2007

bhakta: 10000% Agree IMPEACH NOW

I've been supporting the IMPEACH BUSH & Cronies movement for years. It is absurd that Mr. Clinton got impeached for having oral sex and not confessing it, and Bush can murder, bomb, destroy, invade and decimate societies without sanction of international law and do it with external impunity. Our lawmakers are gutless puppies it seems.



Of course one can see the karmic effects written on Bush's face and know well he will pay for all his atrocities.

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January 31, 2007

ramonmoncho: Impeach NOW

A complicit congress has abdicated its responsibilities to uphold the Constitution and provide meaningful congressional oversight. The "Unitarian President" can unilaterally decide who has civil rights and what treaties and laws he will recognize. The history of the present King George is a history of repeated usurpations having in object the establishment of an absolute tyranny. How far have we come, and how low will we go, before "We the People" say enough to absolute despotism?



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January 31, 2007

a guest: IMPEACH!

The democrats invocation of the impossibility and political folly of impeachment does not pass the test of logic, history, nor empirical data.



The Zogby poll cited by Zinn is only one example of the majority support for impeachment. Furthermore, if one looks at the timeline of the Nixon impeachment, there was nothing even approaching this level of support until well AFTER impeachment proceedings have begun. Many know the issues inside and out, whereas many do not (as is visible with the War Powers debate occurring currently: a 5 minute glance at the constitution makes it perfectly clear that only congress has the power to declare war, as well as appropriate funds for it. It is true that the president is given command over the military once raised, however, this merely points to another warping of our history: the founders never envisioned a huge, expensive, international, standing army!)

The book Zinn cites (Nichols, "Genius of Impeachment") also effectively destroys the "backlash" argument against impeachment. Open impeachment hearings and see what happens with public opinion THEN!

The final irony in all of this is the fact that a group called 'Constitution Summer' put impeachment on the ballot in Berkeley and San Francisco (Pelosi's home district!), which both overwhelmingly passed. Pelosi's ascertainment that impeachment is "off the table" flies in the face of her own constituents. Do we have a Representative Democracy or a Delegative Democracy in this country? Pessimists can choose the latter, I'll still vehemently argue the former (with the intentions of the Founders and the

Constitution as my backing)! IMPEACH NOW!

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January 31, 2007

Arvy: That may have been the intention.



Do we have a Representative Democracy

It's certainly not the current reality unless it is taken to mean corporate sponsorship representation.

The original concept is now referred to as "radical populism", especially when found amongst other governments that fail to appreciate the imposition of US-style "true democracy" as packaged for export.

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January 31, 2007

a guest: Amilcar - I have a Dream - Dr. Martin Luther King

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January 31, 2007

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