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United States

God Bless America, 2

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Less and less, am I confident ANY form of government has yet been devised that cannot or will not be corrupted in the hands of the sort of individual attracted to power.

Recently a 'good Democrat' acquaintance and rabid America-firster recommended to me comments made from the bench by U.S. District Court Judge William Young at the sentencing of the 'shoe bomber', Richard C. Reid, for terroristic acts. Young's remarks rehearsed rambling Bushspeak about terrorists who 'hate our liberties and freedoms', to which my correspondent added the customary exhortation for God to bless America.

John Perkins, the author of the recent book, Confessions of an Economic Hitman, was interviewed on the 4 March 2005 PBS' NOW. Perkins recalled how, for decades, it has been America's policy to ensnare poor countries in debt by offering them 'aid' that they have then to repay. In fact, most of that aid money never leaves this country but goes directly into the pockets of such corporations as Halliburton and Bechtel. Meanwhile the victims of our 'aid' are obliged to repay crushing burdens, in effect becoming slave tributaries to our economic empire. As if to emphasize this point, Paul Wolfowitz, the architect of the Gulf War II, has now been nominated and confirmed head of the World Bank, the very institution that oversees much of the 'aid' to impoverished, Third World countries.

Throughout much of the third world Perkins reports, America is despised, hated and reviled. In Latin America Osama bin Ladin is featured on billboards, his t-shirts proudly, publicly worn by many. Over and over we have been told, by friend and foe alike, as Perkins reiterated once more, the attacks on the WTC were symbolic, not that the rest of the world 'hates OUR liberty and freedoms' but that it hates the 'liberties' we take with, and the 'freedoms' we take from, THEM! Economically and politically, if not literally, we rape pillage, steal and plunder the rest of the world, and even ourselves: recently Congress voted to open the Arctic Wilderness to oil drilling. Yet we expect to be loved and blessed for this stewardship? Are we yet to join another species of great ape that every morning has to move because every night it fouls its nest? There is no other place for us; we are stuck with what we have done and are doing to this planet.

Why is it so many in this country just don't get it? How can we persist so delusional, living in a fantasy world promoted by politicians and pundits too stupid, self-serving, venal or ignorant to tell us truth? What check need reality offer to get us to stop and think?

Why, I've been asked, aren't folks rioting in the streets, the way they were in late '60s; e.g. Miami and the Siege of Chicago? Of course the generations differ now: most of the old protesters are incipient wheelchair or cane cases; but there's more to it than that.

At a college where I once worked, I tried to organize the faculty to protest and resist the outrages of the administration. No such luck. A few colleagues advised me that the reason was those who might have done so were already co-opted by an administration with whom they figured they could get better deals individually, one-on-one. It doesn't take much to buy off a select few with special treatment; others soon line up at the goodie-trough rather than risk working with the rest of us for the good of all. Personal greed, pursuing personal advantage, sucking up to the bosses individually, one is better able to achieve personal success than by cooperative, group action though that tactic means the rest of us are troampled underfoot.

As I survey our 'leadership' now, what I see are mostly individual opportunists, out for personal gain and aggrandizement, regardless of the expense to others: the "I'm all right, Jack" attitude that Peter Sellers typified in the film of the same title; and we, C. M. Kornbluth's, "Marching Morons".

How many Americans would sell their mothers out for creature comforts and entertainment, in fact may have done so already, which of course the neo-con crowd know, count on and pander to? What won them the Congress and the White House: fear, on the one hand; and the promise of gaining personal advantage by disadvantaging others, on the other. Machiavelli is alive, thriving and still working for the ruling crowd.

There IS a vast underclass; there IS the prospect of their rising up at some point in the future; but I suspect they will have to come up against a lot worse than what we've seen so far to consider acting radically. By that time the Bush, or his successor's, homeland will have a lock on 'security' for the ruling elite. America has a severe learning disability. Our leadership's posture has been and remains one of conscious, deliberate neglect, and still we passively acquiese and comply. Ben Franklin said it all: "Who WILL not learn can NOT be taught."

I weep for this country and what it once might have been and become. And I fear for the world the neo-cons are in the process of re-shaping to suit their ends.

We need something that America can and will get, because we surely are not getting it now. Pray God not that s/he 'bless' this country, but that s/he forgive it its sins. The penance will be long, and I suspect, harsh.

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