I DON'T UNDERSTAND

Native born and a 63-year resident, there remains so much I still don't understand about this country:

- The power of pride, the bumpersticker reads. Funny, I thought pride was one of the seven deadly sins. If not, what could we possibly be asked to be proud of?

- America has foisted a war upon Iraq on the basis of incorrect, inaccurate, misleading 'intelligence'. Hundreds of our own and over ten thousand Iraqis have been killed on the basis of false premises, yet nowhere has our government shown the slightest remorse, contrition or offered any apology for our murderous blunder. Sorry about the needlessly maimed and killed? Why not? Why are the streets not filled with angry protest?

- Terrorism is one of the many possible responses of the weak and oppressed to force and oppression. Unless our true objective is the obliteration of the weak and oppressed, the continued imposition of force and oppression as a response to terrorism is transparently counterproductive by furthering the pre-conditions for additional terrorism. The lesson of the Iraq quagmire, as indeed of the Palestinian imbroglio, is that violence begets violence; force breeds retaliation. Are we that learning impaired? Instead of continually making bad matters worse, why not remove the causes of terrorism: cease our oppression and empower the weakened?

- Democracy: rule by the people; oligarchy: rule by a few; plutocracy: rule by the wealthy; chrematocracy: rule by the pursuit of wealth. Bear in mind that democracy is a political expedient for minimizing conflict and dissent; it has nothing whatever to do with whether the right, best or most effective decisions or conclusions are come to. For all the lip service, and vaunted obeisance paid to 'democracy', in practice it is just the superficial facade for our form of political organization. The workings of governance in this country are as oligarchic, unrepresentative and clannish as some primitive tribal rituals, if not worse. And when did you last see a business run democratically? Or an institution? Most businesses and corporations are positively organized on a feudal system: nobility, vassals and serfs. We say we wish to export 'democracy' to the rest of the world, but isn't our model better described as an oligarchy, a plutocracy, a venal chrematocracy or worse? Wouldn't 'democracy' be more saleable to others if we first, truly practiced it here at home?

- Why do workers not earn 'sweat equity' in the concerns they invest their lives' effort in? Investors earn equity, why not the workers? Or is effort less valuable than money? The workers, those who create, produce and maintain the things of real value, are the worst compensated in this country, are treated like disposable commodities: mined,
exploited, used up and discarded like industrial waste destined for the human landfills of our economic system. Isn't something seriously wrong? Why do they put up with such treatment? Why doesn't our most precious resource protest their mistreatment?

- A company is a group of people assembled for a purpose. How can a human own a company? Isn't slavery illegal? If those who provide the funding for a enterprise, its concept and plan of operation, have an investment in it, so too do all others who contribute to the advancement of the company. Company owners take compensation but still count themselves entitled to recovery of their investment when they leave or the company fails or is sold. Why then not the workers, without whom the company would have ceased to function? How is it one or a few can sellout and recoup their investment, when others, employees and workers, who have devoted their productive lives and efforts to the furtherance of the enterprise, are deemed not entitled to a share of the proceeds based on their investment of time and effort. I asked a former manager whether the slightest thought or consideration was given to those tossed out of work, whose pensions were swallowed by management, in the process of dismantling a company. The answer, "No, not a bit!" Why the hell not?

- The present Administration promised honor, dignity and integrity for this country. How about credibility? Where are these gone?

- God bless America, the bumper sticker reads! Seems to me it should be God forgive America for she has surely sinned! Or better, the other bumper sticker: God bless us all, everywhere, no exceptions.

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