On Becoming Fascist
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Civil Rights/Human Rights

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The purpose of the law is to intervene and protect individuals from the excesses of the more powerful, whether singular or collective. Clearly, a major thrust of the Bill of Rights is to protect individuals from the unwarranted intrusion of government into their lives. Now seen principally as vengeance, justice originally sought to balance the needs and rights of the individual against those of others.

The purpose of a democratic government is to serve the people and the aim of a democratic government is to preserve and enhance the welfare of the people it serves.

The original purpose of incorporation was to limit liability for the owners of, the investors in, a company. The aim of a corporation is generally to enhance the pecuniary welfare of its investor-owners.

Thus it is clear that the aims and objectives of a democratic government and any given corporation can be in serious conflict if the people governed differ from the owner-investors of that corporation.

As governments evolve, many come to equate the welfare of the people with the extension and perpetuation of a particular administration or regime, or more insidiously, the continued rule of specific members of a specific regime, despite the obvious fact that practically no government coincides with the people it governs.

Similarly as corporations have evolved, management and executives tend to equate the welfare of their investor-owners with their own welfare and the economic status of the corporation. The corporate objective becomes to _take_ money. Not _make_ money, that is the job of the Bureau of Engraving, corporations take money from others, as much as they can from whomever they can, to enrich their beneficiaries, their investor-owners and the corporation's management. Over and over again it has been demonstrated that, left to their own devices, corporations will cheerfully degrade quality, service and the consequent benefit to their customers and the public in order to increase return to their beneficiaries. Over and over again, the myth that the greater good is achieved by competition between agencies of greed and corporate self-service has been invalidated. When the greater societal good is served by corporations, it is incidental, tangential and only coincidental to their primary purpose: taking money from others to enrich their beneficiaries.

How then did it happen that corporations have become the principal legal entities in this country, far superior both in power and influence to individuals? How is it that corporations have rights that supercede those of individuals, of private citizens? How is it that corporations are granted special privileges, tax breaks, legal standing not available to
individual, private citizens? How is it that the 'interests' of this country at home or abroad are currently commonly 'found' to coincide principally with the pecuniary interests of corporations at the expense of the 'interests' of individuals?

Lincoln got it so wrong: this is a country not of the people, by the people, and for the people; but of business, by business and for business, particularly those organized as corporations. Coolidge said it well: "The business of America is business". Everywhere individuals are secondary, subordinate and subservient to the will of corporations. At the root of the current widening of the income gap between the poor and the most wealthy is the obscenely disproportionate compensation afforded to managers and corporate executives at the expense of the wage earners, full or part-time. Corporate allegiance is seemingly owed first to the executives, management and investors, not to the individuals whose collective efforts make or break the enterprise. Corporations persist and thrive by the exploitation of individual humans destined to be tossed on the waste disposal sites of our capitalist economy when their utility to the corporation is used up.

Allowed to function unrestrained as supra-entities, corporations exhibit the traits of the most lawless individuals: pirates, gangsters and thieves. They conspire with, betray and exploit each other, behave as though nothing matters but their own survival and dominance, and ride roughshod over the welfare of the environment: human, animate or inanimate. Their ethic is rapacious greed, duplicity, deceit and treachery. Their practice is ruthless cannibalism of their own, or others', individual workers or businesses, as though war and conflict with, and extermination of, others were a natural, appropriate process. In individuals such behavior would judged sociopathic if not psychopathic; as corporations, it's nothing personal, just business.

Benito Mussolini, the modern father of fascism, wrote that it "should be properly called corporatism, since it is the merger of state and corporate power" adding that "Fascism .. believes neither in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. It thus repudiates the doctrine of Pacifism .. . War alone brings up to its highest tension all human energy and puts the stamp of nobility upon the peoples who have courage to meet it." Fascism needs war to mobilize, maintain and support the motivation of the populace. Mr. Bush, the current mouthpiece and spokesman of corporatism, proudly declares that he is a "war president", presumably hoping to be exempted this coming November from the fate his father met at the polls. Is that at root then, why he initiated the 'War on Terrorism'? Why we went into Iraq? Not for weapons of mass destruction, not for regime change abroad, not even to avenge "Daddy", but to secure Dubya his second term, to head off regime change here at home?

America is reliving the precedents of previous fascist states: War, conquest, strife, subduing others. Enveloped in a fog of neurotic anxiety and hysteria fostered and promoted by our war-loving leadership, we suck up a steady diet of entertainment that fuels and feeds on fear, conflict and fantasies of triumphal dominance. We revel in competitions not of the clever, not of the compassionate, not of brotherhood and understanding, but of steroidal physical force and mind-numbing endurance of the
unendurable. H. L. Mencken said it well: "No man ever went broke underestimating the taste of the American voter!" In our case the votes cast are dollars at the corporate media, a side show of slick carney entertainment lulling and benumbing the body politic from seriously confronting the mess our political system has made of both our country and the world community. The function of corporations, other than to enrich themselves at the expense of their customer-clients, seems to be to pander to and cultivate the least tasteful, least respectable, least constructive and creative appetites, bathing their consumers in a tepid broth of wishfulfillment in utter denial of the realities of the world we inhabit.

In his 1951 story, "Marching Morons", C. M. Kornbluth foretold an America controlled by a corporatistic government ruling a people so dumbed-down and benumbed they were oblivious to the deterioration of their state. Has that now come to pass? Is there anything individuals, singly or collectively, can do to alter the path this country seems to have chosen? "Like father, like son; one term and you're done" may not be enough to stem this country's passive acquiescence to, and descent into, national corporatism.

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