

The Rabid Right Hits Back

When Barack Obama was elected president, millions of people thought that the radical right was finished. The majority of US voters rejected the hysteria, the commitment to ignorance and use of stock, meaningless sound bites that Sarah Palin best represented.

They're Back

Yet here we are less than a year later, and these types are back. "*Adolph Hitler, like Barack Obama, ruled by dictate,*" commented far right talk show host Rush Limbaugh. "Hitler, Stalin, a Nazi, a Communist," millions of Limbaugh's listeners are calling Obama. They are working themselves up into an increased frenzy, now seen by the spectacles they are creating at the "town hall" public meetings that the Democrats are organizing to discuss what their plans for health care reform. The timidity of the reformers, their failure to clearly point to the disaster of a for-profit health care system and to provide a clear alternative – this has enormously helped create the confusion upon which the radical right plays. This timidity is also shown in their refusal to openly confront the rabid right's bullying tactics at the town hall public meetings. Instead, the reformers confine themselves to futile appeals for "reasonableness" and "civility".

The radical right is whipping up opposition to any government involvement in the health care industry. They still cling to the myth of the "free market". Sarah Palin resigned as governor of Alaska and now seems to be moving towards becoming the populist leader of these elements. She is now calling Obama's health reform plans "evil" and implying that his plans include euthanasia of people like her Down's Syndrome son.

Also woven through their opposition is the fact that the overwhelming majority of them are absolutely beside themselves that a black man has been elected president. Along with their attacks on Obama for his health "reform" plan have gone all sorts of other campaigns of theirs. Most prominent, and most hysterical, has been the "birthers" movement. This is the claim that Obama was not really born in the United States. Rather he was born in Kenya. Since the US Constitution requires a US president to have been born here, Obama should not be in office and a constitutional crisis is developing they claim.

Although rejected by the majority of people in the United States, clearly this radical right is not going to go away quietly, and an understanding of their roots is important.

Background

Religious mysticism and confusion has long been a part of US culture and politics. In recent decades it has actually increased. For instance, some 30-40% of the adult population believes that at some time in the near future they will be suddenly transported up to heaven to sit at god's side. Sixty-one percent believe that it is literally true that god created the Earth in six days. (Kevin Phillips, "*American Theocracy*") Obviously, not all, nor even necessarily the majority of these people make up the rabid right wing that is so tied in with racism. However, they do form the background for the refusal to look at

human society in a scientific way, the failure to seriously think about material cause and effect as far as human society is concerned.

Republicans & “Southern Strategy”

In the 1960s and ‘70s, some huge cultural changes came about. Open racism was no longer considered acceptable in most circles. The role of women changed significantly (for the better). There was a greater acceptance of different “life styles”. A layer of middle income and poor people, mainly white, saw these changes as a threat, and the Republican Party played on this to develop a new base. It transformed itself from a party whose entire membership, they used to say, could be fit into one country club. Richard Nixon first initiated this transformation (called the Southern Strategy) and subsequent US presidents – from Reagan on down – carried it further. They appealed to these backwards prejudices, including racism (all the while denying they were doing so). They encouraged the development of a base of radical right activists within the Republican Party. The issue of a woman’s right to have an abortion was one of the main ones they used at that time. The Democrats made concession after concession to these politics.

Wing of Capitalist Class

This was not just an electoral strategy of the Republican Party. Ever since the days of the New Deal (1930s), there has been a significant layer of the tops of the capitalist class itself that has not accepted any changes. They see no reason that the US cannot return to the good old days of the 1920s and even before. These were the days when women were kept in the kitchen, black people could not vote or even walk on the sidewalk, and workers’ attempts to build unions were drowned in blood. In other words, complete and total control over society coupled with domination and even terrorism over every sector that is not wealthy, white males.

These were the elements that funded the far-right think tanks that developed the “intellectual” basis for the far right. Foremost amongst them is Richard Mellon Scaif, oil and banking multi-millionaire and great grandson of the famous “Robber Baron” Thomas Mellon. Also included are such capitalists as members of the Coors family. These are the ones, for instance, who also financed the campaigns against President Bill Clinton around the Whitewater affair.

The majority of their fellow capitalists do not accept their crude approach to world affairs. This was why they installed Obama in the White House. However, there is such a thing as class solidarity amongst the capitalist class. Moreover, the Scaif’s and Coors’s act as the most militant wing of their class. The harder they fight, and the more they fight for, the more reasonable the other wins of the capitalist class appear.

Future Use for Rabid Right

Finally, there is another important issue: Right now, the overwhelming majority of the capitalist class does not want to see US society consumed in racial divisions, nor see a xenophobic movement sweep the nation, possibly leading it to all-out war. Such developments would destabilize the world economy and harm their profits. However, if a massive economic crisis arises, or if they become convinced that an all-out war is

necessary (for instance with Iran and its allies), then they will need to increase the influence of these far right elements. Related to this, if a massive workers' movement develops, they will need to fall back on racism, sexism and xenophobia. In fact, these very forces are being used to help prevent a workers' movement today.

Workers' Movement & Socialism

The great bulk of the capitalist class, therefore, prefers to keep these prejudices simmering on the back burner, without them boiling over. Thus do the more "moderate" wings of the capitalist class work hand-in-hand with their more extreme class partners in crime. It should also be pointed out that they cannot always control these forces that they have created. However, while they still have an influence, the radical right is not about to seize power today. More important, they stand as a warning for a future time when larger wings of the capitalist class may decide to push them forward once again. Only a mass, united, workers' movement, which ultimately succeeds in ending capitalism itself, can be the real protection against them.