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Progressive Ponderings
“Entitlements” – Part 2

One advantage of corporate ability to multi-locate is to become chartered in a country known as a “tax haven.” In many cases this is as simple as securing a mailing address. Corporate physical assets remain in place and the corporation functions as if no change has taken place – except that now that its office is located in the “tax haven,” it has certain tax advantages. American law provides no penalties for this disloyal and unpatriotic action toward the country which first made the corporation prosperous. In fact, many corporations that have made this move continue to receive contracts from Uncle Sam. Disloyalty places no constraints on corporate “entitlements” from the industrial/government complex.

The corporate world also believes that it is entitled to tax breaks and infrastructure enhancement if it is to locate a new plant in another area. Sometimes these tax breaks are called “tax increment financing,” but whatever the name, the corporation demands subsidies (entitlements) for the new site from the local government. In fact, corporations often negotiate with multiple communities enticing each community to raise its subsidy in a bidding war. Once the corporation builds within a chosen community it has an advantage over older local businesses and doesn’t contribute its fair share for its own police and fire protection, for infrastructure maintenance, for schools or amenities for its employees. Politicians frequently court businesses with these entitlements.

The federal government through its various agencies, and states through their system of public universities, are engaged in multiple areas of research. Often corporations partner with these agencies and institutions. When a product results from this research, the patent normally goes to the corporation which produces the product to sell to the public at monopolistic prices. This is the same public that paid for the research and now pays a higher price for the patented product. Many of our exorbitantly priced drugs fall into this category of corporate entitlements.

Air waves are considered public. In order to broadcast radio and television, companies need a license. These licenses are worth thousands, millions, even billions of dollars. Yet our government not only sells them cheaply but also allows, even encourages, monopolistic practices of this public resource. Citizens pay high monthly fees into this “entitlement” give-away by our business/government complex.

Income from money making money is more sacred under capitalism than money earned by the sweat of the human brow. This assertion by the wealthy has resulted in “entitlements” in taxation through special treatment for dividends, capital gains, and municipal bonds. Although many of us enjoy this tax break, ninety percent of the benefit goes to a few percent of people who really own America.

Carbon, especially from burning fossil fuels, is choking our planet. Our lifestyles will have to change if we are to survive. The Bush/Cheney/corporate administration refuses to face the problem or seek workable solutions when such actions would decrease business profits. This cabal, asserting the “entitlement” of its “right to pollute” is proposing “carbon trading” as a solution. “Carbon trading” allows the “right to pollute.” Buying and selling carbon “credits” really guarantees the right to pollute into the distant future. This whole carbon trading scheme is a perfect example of how democracy has been sold out to “market forces.” When harming our earth home becomes “marketable” we are selling out ourselves and our children.

Language is important. Human beings left behind by an economic system concerned only with profit are frequently in need of societal assistance. Instead of providing life-saving necessities we choose to blame the victims and reward the oppressors. “Entitlements” to the unfortunate are given a negative connotation by a society obsessed with getting its own entitlements under other schemes and names. What Christian scripture verses support this perversion of “Jesus saves”? (To be continued)

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