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Progressive Ponderings
Imperialism – Part 3

Empire can be political, economic or even religious. This Pax Americana in progress reflects all three: 1) It is fostered by a political ideology of the radical right with a self-righteousness that condemns all other political ideas; 2) It is controlled by the same economic interests that now control most of the United States government; 3) A far-right fundamentalist Christianity supports and uses this imperialistic government for its own ends.

As empire develops from a supposedly democratic nation, its motives are couched in acceptable terms. The terms used to pursue economic empire today are "free trade" and globalization." "Free trade" is a mellow phrase that only an isolationist could be against, and an example of either/or simplistic reasoning.

We are told that globalization will lead to greater equality and freedom for everyone, that Third World nations and peoples will be brought into First World progress through it. If so, why does it need the world's greatest military to enforce its aims?

Globalization should always have the modifier "corporate" attached to it. It does nothing to enhance the private citizen's ability to move around globally, but has everything to do with the corporate ability to move goods, money, and the corporation itself from country to country without regulation or restriction.

Corporate sages tell us that globalization is inevitable, and that is because they have organizations – the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, and the International Monetary Fund and agreements GATT, NAFTA – in place that ensure the reliability of their prediction. These organizations are all controlled by business and operate basically in secret (private citizens and even Congress know little regarding them) by people unanswerable to any elected government. Unfortunately, they have the power to overturn laws enacted by sovereign states.

Loan agreements by the IMF and World Bank invariably force Third World countries to purchase services and materials from the corporations of countries which provide loan money to these organizations. The U.S. is the largest provider of funds. These agreements bestow more business opportunities on large corporations, but they are a doubtful benefit to Third World countries already saddled with debt. When countries default on their debt, the lending institutions impose "structural adjustment" programs. These programs usually demand that nations retool their economies completely toward foreign trade in order to receive cash for debt relief.

Privatization of previously publicly owned services, foreign plunder of natural resources, devastation of the environment, and exemption from labor laws are frequent results of "structural adjustment." When the merchants move in with all the power of world-wide organizations, the country, the resources and the people become merchandise. Like God, these organizations and their merchant overseers have no doubt regarding their own impunity and immortality.

Corporate globalization, like all forms of imperialism, is a system of domination. Protests against it are labeled "communism," "revolution," and "terrorism." Governments around the world, including our own, allow and even encourage property to dominate people. Corporate imperialism is achieving its aims throughout the world and yet emerges as beneficent. That's what power and impunity can achieve.

Progressivism is the opposite of domination. It places the welfare of people first. It isn't limited by national boundaries. It expects and demands that government be "of, by, and for the people." It exposes power and impunity. It practices "all men (and women) are created equal."

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