

July 18, 2007
Progressive Ponderings
Fear

The United States has the greatest nuclear bomb capacity in the world, spends as much on its military as the remainder of the world combined; has the strongest Air Force, the strongest Navy, the best equipped Army and Marine Corp; it has approximately 750 military bases in 130 foreign countries as “peacekeepers”; it is now employing “mercenary” armies and it is the world’s leading supplier of arms and munitions. Yet, U.S. citizens are the most fearful on the planet. Who benefits from this incoherence? Is this incoherence deliberately encouraged?

- Fear - is a control measure
- suppresses the intellect and raises the emotions
 - makes manipulating people easy
 - leads to unquestioning consent and obedience
 - is the demagogues’ leading weapon
 - causes citizens to willingly pay taxes for the world’s largest military

Fear needs an enemy. In the past, the following have threatened to “annihilate” us according to our leaders – Cuba, Haiti, Grenada, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Panama, Iraq, Libya. These “world powers” were all used to generate citizens’ fear, to build up military budgets, to strengthen administration’s support, to supply an excuse for United States aggression. Who benefits?

Fear is divisive. Division is achieved among the electorate with an agenda of deceptive issues, a tactic that power seekers use especially when they hold minority positions on issues that concern voters the most. For example, the business party never wants to campaign on issues of wealth disparity, equality, tax breaks for the wealthy, campaign finance reform, regulation or privatization. But once in power they pursue a strict pro-business agenda. Deceptive issues cause workers to vote against their own economic well-being.

Fear worked well for Bush, Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz and all the neocons on “The Project for a New American Century.” Using fear they are dismantling the Constitution and destroying American credibility in the world. Using fear they drastically weakened domestic freedom, increased terrorism, and cause many in the world to look at the United States as the world’s greatest terrorist. Who benefits?

Fear worked so well for Bush and co. that the current crop of republican presidential candidates are each trying to out-fear the others. Their debate strategy seems to be a curious mixture of distancing themselves from Bush/Cheney while at the same time trying to out-fear-monger the administration’s methods. Besides “terrorism” they embrace “immigrants” and “homosexuals” as the cause of all that is now wrong in America. Deficits, health care, social security, crime, drugs, unemployment, all get mentioned as being caused by or associated with immigration.

Fear is also promoted as a reason for electing the most right-wing of the right-wing because those of us who aren’t “re-born” or Christian enough are attempting to undermine all that is good in America – tax cuts for the wealthy, Christian patriotism and militarism, the Gospel of power and wealth, and especially sexual morality. Analyzing their debates and rhetorical comments finds no connection to the Christian Gospel of “love your neighbor” or “love your enemy.”

As the bipartisan drumbeats against war get louder and faster, the Bush administration again plays its only tune, “Be Afraid!” Tuesday, July 17, the director of national security issued a very “limited” and “selective” national security assessment. “Al Qaeda is on the rise again.” “Don’t question the president.” “Be afraid for at least three more years.” Even this very selective view of intelligence suggests a strong need to indict the fear-mongers. Six years after 9/11 and no progress! Still, out of fear they want us to follow the suicidal path where they’re leading us. What kind of people fear-monger their way to power? The emperor is naked!
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