

Mindless Propaganda (1-26-98)

So, the other day I found myself accidentally reading one of George Will's columns. It is a painful thing to do to one's self and I don't recommend it. Will's commentaries are generally on an intellectual and moral par with Nazi eugenics films, so one must have the stomach for it.

Why is this guy a nationally syndicated columnist anyway? I don't bother to read much of his stuff, but the one I did read could only be described as mindless reactionary propaganda. It is the mindless part that bothers me most. Which is probably the reason why Will is so widely published in the for-profit media. He writes demented rationalizations of the insane injustice perpetuated in the valueless, soulless pursuit of profit.

On this occasion Will was complaining about those bastions of freethinking, the New York Times and Washington Post. Evidently the people at these capitalist newspapers observed that the pope and Fidel Castro both share certain core humanitarian values which are contradictory with Will's free market (and/or fascist) ideology. Will calls these mouthpieces for private profit liberal, although compared to him I think Gordon Liddy is a liberal, so his use of that word doesn't mean much.

The stories referred to said that the pope and Fidel have both condemned the current state of the world, and in particular the misery and complete lack of human values that accompany capitalism. It is interesting that the world's best known Communist and best known Christian share a core of values in their self-described respect for human dignity. The pope has written that while he supports private property rights, these rights do not override the basic human right to a fair distribution of wealth. Obviously, this is something Fidel also believes, although Fidel would argue that private ownership of the means of production causes injustice.

Will's immediate problem with this has to do with Fidel's leadership, which Will claims has prevented Cubans from, "participating in the greatest years of wealth-creation and freedom-expansion in history."

Perhaps one should have respect for Will's human dignity and not make fun of his intellectual deficiencies. I am at a loss to even know what to say about something so inane. It is true that rich people here and a few in Latin America have been getting richer and richer since the Cuban Revolution of 1959. But everyone else, the vast majority of the people of Latin America and here, have seen a decline in their standard of living. Working people in the capitalist world have seen the greatest years of wealth-destruction not creation.

And freedom-expansion, like the Mayan people of Mexico who are being slaughtered by a Mexican army trained and armed by the United States? Freedom-expansion like that experienced by the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Americans who have lost their livelihood to global free trade? Or the 1.1 million of us now in prison?

And let's not forget the wealth-creation and freedom-expansion experienced by the people of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union whose societies, education and health care systems are now on the verge of collapse. People around the world are now much freer to starve, jobless, and unclothed than any time in modern history. But the rich are freer to amass obscene amounts of wealth at the expense of the rest of us. I'm sure the Cuban people thank both God and Fidel that they have missed out on this.

All Will has come up with is deceitful and mindless drivel. This is the best and the brightest the ruling class has to offer?

The other, larger issue raised in the commentary in question is a bizarre comment about liberals supposedly assuming that harmony is the natural condition of human beings. The implication, left unsaid and undeveloped, is that Will thinks conflict is the natural state of human beings. While it is true that one cannot logically argue that anything like a human “nature” exists, this reality cuts both ways. It is just as foolish to argue that humans are inherently harmonious as it is to argue that humans are inherently fractious.

Humans respond to their environment, and in a system based on cruelty and greed some become cruel and greedy. No mystery there, except to George Will.

Perhaps we should just pity him, for it must be frustrating to have such a fragile grasp on reality. That may explain his penchant for defending barbarism, forced starvation, and all the senseless misery around the world in the service of profit for a tiny minority.

If George Will is the best the capitalist class can come up with to justify their totalitarian rule then they can't have very long left.