

In the News 3-2-98

Ever notice how some days the news is filled with the most obvious examples of class struggle, yet the corporate news people never address it directly. The cumulative effect can be surreal. February 27, 1998 was one of those days.

Item number 1, working-class versus owning-class in the struggle for political power. The Republicans in Congress managed to filibuster to death the most recent attempt at campaign finance reform. According to their leadership this was an act they undertook with pride. To their way of thinking campaign finance reform is a threat to democracy, and to the First Amendment to our Constitution. One must wonder about this kind of “thinking.”

The argument goes that the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment guarantees freedom of speech, and that any limit on the amount of money the wealthy can use to buy influence in government is a restriction of free speech. Their idea of democracy means the wealthy deciding together – democratically, as it were – how government will be run. The fact that big money drowns out all other speech is by design so they have no problem with it.

Sure the Republicans pretend that labor unions have significant influence because labor is able to muster a few paltry millions of dollars. But in the most recent national elections the estimates of the amount of money spent were over a billion dollars – a thousand million. Labor spent, maybe, fifty million counting everything. Who spent the other 950 million dollars? And what kind of influence did this money buy?

Does the buying of influence contribute to democracy?

Item number 2, peoples of the world versus the global capitalist class in the struggle for justice. The Clinton administration announced that while it was not “Certifying” Columbia as being a “good guy” in the so-called war on drugs, that it is issuing a waiver of the two year old sanctions. These sanctions had restricted non-military and non-police ties with Columbia as a kind of punishment of the fact that Columbia is run using cocaine money. Oddly enough, so-called counter narcotics support still went ahead, while humanitarian, trade, and diplomatic contacts were all limited. The end result is that the armed camp that is Columbia was further armed, more death squads were trained, and the right-wing drug lords continued to run the country.

Columbia is a mess. It is a mess because of the drug trade and because of our government training para-military and military death squads at places like Ft. Benning’s “School of Assassins” (as the people of Latin America call it). These death squads are the real proxy of U.S. power because they exist to keep the peasants poor and exploited.

Columbia is on the verge of collapse, and the profits from cocaine must not be enough to keep the current pro-capitalist government functioning, thus the waiver. It is not about counter-narcotics efforts, we all know that the CIA controls most of the global cocaine trade, just as it has always controlled the heroin trade. So we will all pretend now that Columbia is fighting drugs not profiting from them, just as we do with Mexico. It is hard to believe that the Secretary of State can actually talk about these things with a straight face – but she does.

Do death squads killing peasants in the Third World bring about democracy?

Item number 3, ruling class oppression of subordinate classes. It turns out that the FBI came to a settlement with a former crime lab employee who blew the whistle on the gross incompetence and racism that defined the FBI’s supposedly well respected National

Crime Lab. The FBI harassed and then fired this employee and is now paying him \$1.6 million to keep him quiet.

Some people might still believe that the FBI exists to fight crime. The recent news out of the lab indicates that this is not the case, that in fact the FBI exists to harass people, frame them, and keep the prison population up. For those familiar with the now notorious Cointelpro program of the 1960's and 70's (we are told it has ended) the news out of the lab is old hat. Of course the FBI exists as an arm of repression, keeping the people from challenging the powers that be.

Does rampant corruption in the nations most powerful "crime fighting" organization support democracy?

The corporate media presented all of these stories on the same day as if things are still fine, that we do not live in a totalitarian society in which decisions are made in the service of the wealth of a few. Corporate society pretends that the government does not terrorize its own population, that foreign policy decisions are not made solely in the service of domination, and that most of us are not denied democratic and equal access to power.

Believe it all if you must, some do because they cannot deal with the uncomfortable reality of a society on the edge. But our society is on the edge, the contradictions are becoming too sharp to be ignored or covered up.

When reading the corporate news sometimes one can only laugh. It is either that or cry.