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Political Perspective - Notes From Old Noank Jail

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Having watched the election political aftermath on TV, I was impressed by President Obama as he graciously took charge and accepted the blame for the poor showing nationally by the Democrats. Perhaps this was the honorable thing to do, rather than blame the attacks generated against him by the Republicans. However, in my seventy years, with the exception of Watergate, I've never seen such a vicious campaign by one party against the other. In a recent DAY article, columnist Paul Choiniere describes the "sleazy lies by anonymous corporate powers aimed at destroying candidates for office.....thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision and the self-centered actions of Republican Senators."

I am reminded of a dialog called "The American Dream" by the late George Carlin, where he describes America as being manipulated by the "owners" of large corporations. They are the "real owners of this country.. the ones who control things and make all the important decisions. The politicians are put there to give you the idea that you have freedom of choice. You don't. You have owners. They own you. They own everything. They own all the important land....and they own big media companies so they control the news and information you get to hear... They spend billions of dollars every year, lobbying, to get what they want. They want more for themselves and less for everybody else..."

Who are these corporate people and where can we find an example of them?

The August 30, 2010 edition of The New Yorker magazine carried an article by Jane Mayer titled "Covert Operations, the billionaire brothers who are waging a war against Obama." She describes, in considerable detail, the activities of Charles and David Koch of Koch Industries in Wichita, Kansas. They operate oil refineries in three states with 4,000 miles of pipeline and they own Brawny Paper Towels, Dixie Cups, Georgia-Pacific Lumber, Stainmaster Carpet and Lycra....with total revenues of 100 billion dollars. Their own personal combined fortune is estimated at 35 billion dollars.

Briefly, they favor lower corporate taxes, minimal social services for the needy and much less environmental oversight by the government. They have been cited and heavily fined on numerous occasions for pollution and environmental violations. They privately donate very large sums of money to organizations that fight climate change legislation, health-care reform and the economic stimulus program. They support organizations such as "Americans for Prosperity" (which helps direct the Tea Party activity), "Patients United Now" (rallies against health care reform), "The Cato Institute" (tax cuts, reduce social services and environmental laws) and "Triad Management" (attacking certain politicians) which was financed by the "Economic Education Trust" (financed by the Koch brothers).

In 2000, the brothers supported the Bush campaign and benefited from nearly 100 million dollars in government contracts since then. They depend on remaining obscure so the

general public won't be aware of their activities. One source (from the article) describes them as having a "pattern of lawbreaking, political manipulation and obfuscation." Another (article) source describes the Tea Party movement as " a grassroots citizen's movement brought to you by a bunch of oil billionaires."

As Mr. Choiniere notes, "shadowy, non-profit groups are using tens of millions of dollars in corporate donations to launch spurious attacks on political opponents, mostly Democrats....the message that these corporations ...can whisper into the ears of lawmakers could not be more chilling: Vote with us or we can bury you in the next election without even leaving a fingerprint."

Can we bring such outrageous activity under control? Perhaps George Carlin gives us some direction..."I'll tell you what they (the "owners") don't want...they don't want a population of citizens... well informed, well educated people... capable of critical thinking. That doesn't help them...that is against their interests...they want...obedient workers...people who are just smart enough to run the machines and do the paperwork...and just dumb enough to passively accept the increasingly lower pay, longer hours, reduced benefits, end of overtime, and the vanishing pension."

In conclusion, perhaps Mr. Obama was right to take some of the responsibility for the "shellacking," but, in view of the above, he shouldn't take all of it. And for those of us who feel that we still have some brains left, perhaps it is now time we sat up and took notice of what really happened with this election, who else was at least partly responsible and bring their activities out in the open for public scrutiny.
