

Corporatism In A Nutshell

Corporatism can be defined as State-corporate collusion. In other words, it is the process by which politicians within government collude with plutocrats in the private sector for mutual aggrandizement. There are three different roles in the cast of characters of typical a corporatist scenario:

A:Corporatist politicians: Those selling access and influence for money

B:Corporate interests: Those purchasing access and influence with money

C:Corporate lobbyists: Those serving as the liaisons between A and B.

The players within C are the facilitators of State-corporate collusion. Lobbyists are the deal-brokers, the networkers, the wheeler-dealers. They are the peddlers of cash to A...and the peddlers of influence to B. The equation is quite straight-forward: One party has the legislative influence; the other has the cash. One craves the cash; the other craves legislative influence. It's an exchange made in heaven.

Corporatism, then, is merely a transaction between two parties: each providing the other with what it has for what the other wants. A is comprised of politicians—masquerading as public servants—advancing their careers via legalized graft. Within B are the plutocrats, who's sumum bonum is to accumulate as much wealth for themselves as possible. C simply brings A and B together (while taking a cut for itself). In this transaction, the winners are A, B, and C; the losers are everyone else. This is a self-perpetuating process.

C essentially serves as a 4th branch of government: a sort of shadow branch. (Thus, the federal government is comprised of the executive, the judicial, the legislative, and K Street.) C operates under the auspices of simple ombudsman-ship. That is, its henchmen engage in their machinations using the noble-sounding pretense: We are advocates for America's "entrepreneurs", "job-creators" and "producers". (The pretense only works for those who succumb to Neoliberal Newspeak. It is utterly transparent to the rest of us.)

The collusion between corporate power (B) and the grifters planted within the system (A) has become the most fundamental element of U.S. government. Those within A serve their paymasters while those within B bribe their connections inside

the system. In the end, both parties in the transaction stand to gain tremendous amounts of money—even as they sabotage the democratic process. That the general populace gets screwed is of no concern to A, B, and C. The sine qua non of A is wealth and power for A. The sine qua non of B is wealth and power for B. The sine qua non of C is wealth and power for C.

The revolving door that exists between A, B, and C ensures that the cronyism involved is perpetually fortified. In this way, flagrant conflicts of interest are endemic to the system—a glaring dysfunction for any mechanism striving to be a “public service”. If someone is in a position to, say, oversee the dealings of investment banks, they should neither have COME FROM the investment banking industry, nor be able to GO TO the investment banking industry after leaving office. If someone is in a position that, say, oversees corporate activity, they should neither have FORMERLY BEEN a corporate lobbyist (a.k.a. “consultant”), nor be able to BECOME a corporate lobbyist (a.k.a. “consultant”) after leaving office. There couldn’t be a more straight-forward solution to the egregious conflicts of interest that currently plague the system. So what in heaven’s name are we waiting for?

Such standards are so basic, the need for them so obvious, it is a wonder that there is any question whatsoever about applying them. The concept, “conflict of interest” is a fundamental concept that even a child can understand. These are simple ideas—yet corporatism runs rampant. So, naturally, the query arises: How on Earth is the current scheme allowed to persist? That is: How do these players get away with it?

Corporatism is predicated on the condition that political campaigns are run on CASH. Elections are essentially money-raising competitions. Campaign, then, are all about fundraising (soliciting funds from moneyed interests) because elections have degenerated to little other than marketing / propaganda contests. Marketing and propaganda dissemination require MONEY, not good ideas. So MONEY, not good ideas, is what determines the success of a campaign.

Here, candidates are reduced to brand-names: images vying for supremacy in a marketplace. The electorate has thereby been rendered target customers—a mob of consumers falling prey to hype and veneers of appeal-ability. In this scheme, the electorate is expected to base its choices on petty, superficial things—not on the objective merit of policy proposals. Selections in the voting booth are based on one’s myopic impression of snazzy sound-bites, engineered stigmas, manufactured stereotypes, catchy slogans, and loose associations.

Thus, the buying and selling of politicians is simply the free market in action. Campaigns (and the political process itself) are rendered mere theater for a passive-minded audience: a herd consumers seeking to BUY something—to be enticed, amused, and appeased by their favorite performer. So long as such conditions persist, the system is primed for rampant corporatism.

This is the right-wing modus operandi in a nutshell. While the primary vessel for the right-wing agenda is the G.O.P., the internal mechanism by which it is executed is corporatism. In other words, corporatism is inherently right-wing.

Starting in the 70's, the most fanatical right-wing ideologues were able to secure positions of immense power. For the next couple decades, icons of the movement included Irving Kristol, William Kristol, Karl Rove, Grover Norquist, Dick Cheney, William F. Buckley Jr., Jack Abramoff, Tom Delay, Antonin Scalia, and Ralph Reed. These were the movement's lodestars—the impresarios of corporatism. They were the die-hard ideologues who mobilized a following and made it into a cult...and then profited handsomely from their deeds. They acted as savvy power-brokers behind the scenes...and as shameless demagogues while on the public stage. They were, one and all, relentless careerists.

The ideology, then, naturally became a full-fledged cult—a cult promoted by minions who were able to infiltrate the halls of power starting in the 70's, continuing through Reagan, then in the 90's, and reaching a deafening crescendo in the early 2000's. (We are now, hopefully, in its denouement.) The impresarios of this movement are single-minded and determined...and only by educating the citizenry will the electorate finally stop endorsing the right-wing agenda that has harmed so many.

Understanding the movement is key. It is oriented around a simple-minded, Manichean worldview. The ideology that offers a veneer or credence to corporatism exhibits all the standard traits of a cult. It is pathologically reactionary, flagrantly plutocratic, vehemently anti-intellectual, and driven by obsession with infidels / heretics (i.e. an obsessive anti-communist mindset). Like most cult activity (i.e. any right-wing phenomenon), the movement is based on paranoia, superstition, groupthink, and an obnoxious level of self-righteousness. A smug sense of entitlement, myriad neuroses, and a worship of financial wealth characterize the most avid adherents.

For decades now, the right-wing icons have served as dogma-mongers. The promulgation of myths is their stock in trade. The target audience has always consisted of two primary types of people:

1. The avaricious plutocrats who's bidding they serve
2. The un-informed, credulous portion of the rabble (i.e. those who can be duped into rallying around the iniquitous cause)

(In other words, the subscribers include both those willing to exploit the subalterns AND those subalterns who could be persuaded to endorse their own exploitation).

Thus, the movement on which corporatism is predicated is comprised of two facets: corporate power and an oblivious multitude. In order to be a Republican, one has to be one of two types:

- Someone who is comparatively rich and quite greedy
- Someone who is relatively uneducated and very gullible

These two groups account for the two basic profiles of the target consumer for right-wing ideology. The G.O.P. consists of the Svengalies and the suckers. This state of affairs is the basis for any oligarchy.

The plutocrats exploit the rank and file by manipulating them into going along with the plutocratic order. The best way to manipulate the general populace is to keep them ignorant and distracted. (After all, people are easier to exploit if they're blissfully oblivious.) Primed for exploitation, the least educated and the most credulous eagerly rally around the right-wing agenda being peddled to them—thereby voting Republican.

And so they have...for the last 3 decades.

(A fascinating case-study is the 2009-2010 "Tea Party" movement. Here is a plutocrat-funded, plutocrat-orchestrated, corporatist movement that masquerades as a grass-roots movement. The followers are comprised EXCLUSIVELY of stupendously misinformed, staggeringly credulous people who've been hoodwinked into thinking that they're somehow fighting for their own freedom and empowerment. They have succumbed to right-wing (i.e. corporatist) propaganda, and thus are under the impression that they are advocating for the general welfare by supporting right-wing policy. We should find it deeply disturbing that so many people can be so easily conned.)

Logically, then, those who are especially prone to hyper-nationalism and religious fundamentalism are especially prone to being swept up in such cult activity. Indeed, hyper-nationalists and fundamentalist religionists are the prototypical followers of right-wing movements. The psychological profile of such people is optimal for indoctrination. And so it goes: The target-audience for right-wing propaganda is readily identifiable.

Because this is the part of the electorate that is ripe for hoodwinking, the corporatist propaganda is tailored to appeal to THESE people in particular. We need only look at the actual fan-base of Rush Limbaugh, Sean Hannity, Mark Levin, Michael Savage, Glenn Beck, et. al. for this trend to become quite clear. These celebrity charlatans know their target audience, and cater to the salient mentalities with aplomb.

We shouldn't be dumfounded by this state of affairs. In a country where millions are woefully uneducated, millions fall for their sham. Corporatism is depicted as the quintessence of democracy while progressivism is caricatured as some menacing threat to freedom. The distorted version of Reality is enticing to the ignorant and gullible, so it is swallowed hook, line, and sinker. It's a simple, enticing narrative—catnip to the untutored mind.

Thus, the ill-informed segment of the rabble is duped into supporting the very forces that exploit it. Such people cheer for those who will screw them over in the end—glorifying a process that benefits the plutocrats at the expense of the general populace. Meanwhile, the plutocrats are praised as defenders of democracy and freedom...and any progressive reform eschewed. Corporatists are lionized while progressives are demonized. The political version of Stockholm Syndrome is the result.

The ascendancy of the corporatist agenda was palpable between Reagan's rise to power and G.W. Bush's regime. Those who were both comparatively rich and very greedy (each alone is a necessary but insufficient condition), were the primary culprits. In order to secure their own aggrandizement, such figures became affiliated with corporate lobbyists (The Chamber of Commerce, Club For Growth, Business Roundtable, AHIP, PhRMA, etc.) and right-wing "think-tanks" (The Federalist Society, Americans For Prosperity, The Heritage Foundation, The AEI, etc.) The lobbies bought the politicians in order to dictate legislation...while the think-tanks orchestrated the propaganda in order to dupe the susceptible segment of the electorate.

In this way, the plutocrats can influence elections in favor of corporate power...and then dictate legislation once their minions are elected. A positive feedback loop ensues. Corporatism is a self-reinforcing process. Those WITH power will USE that power to MAINTAIN the state of affairs on which their power is predicated.

The system, therefore, is comprised of covert bribery (i.e. legalized graft), quid pro quos (favours-swapping), deal-making (sometimes strong-arming, if necessary), and dogma-mongering (the systematic dissemination of misinformation). The process is Machiavellian through and through. Political maneuvering, cronyism, power-grabs: these are the means by which the Machine operates. The primary players in this well-staged charade are A, B, and C. (The audience, it could be said, is the citizenry.)

In order to diagnose the dire nature of this process, we need to ask two simple questions: "Cui bono?" and "At whose expense?" That is, who gets screwed and who laughs all the way to the bank? In order to answer these questions, we need only do one thing: Follow the money.

This isn't about engaging in specious conspiracy theories; it's about exposing actual conspiratorial activity as it happens. In other words, this isn't a matter of idle speculation based on paranoia and delusion; it's merely a matter of revealing irrefutable facts by way of patient, meticulous critical analysis. The diagnosis is quite straight-forward once we understand what to look for.

Currently, the due diligence and careful scrutiny required to elucidate and understand these systemic dysfunctions is woefully lacking. It's time to put our foot down and say, "Enough's enough." Step #1 is to candidly diagnose the underlying problem: corporatism.

The next step is to mitigate the systematic cronyism involved. This can be accomplished by outlawing the revolving door between A, B, and C. Until this is done, conflicts of interest will infest the political process. Funneling tax-payer money into schemes of corporate socialism (so as to pay back campaign contribution favors—and benefit one's cronies): The difference between this and embezzlement is merely a specious legal formality. Yet this is precisely how our government currently runs. Such is the nature of a right-wing government. All the wheeling and dealing behind closed doors—between office lines, off the record: this is the stuff of cronyism, not of democracy. And this is precisely how the corporatists want it to stay. A, B, and C get away with doing what they do because there is little transparency.

However, the primary way to counteract corporatism is via revolutionary campaign reform. When elections are no longer based on money-accumulation, three happy consequences will result: C will be out of a job...meaning politicians will no longer have the incentive to be part of A...which will dilute the power of B. In such a scenario, A, B, and C are deprived of their power to rig the system in their own favor...and everyone else wins.

CONFLATING HUMANS WITH CORPORATIONS:

Unless one is a hyper-post-modernist, it is a fundamental truth that people are not social / psychological constructs, and social / psychological constructs are not people. In a twist or irony, radical right-wing elements have adopted the hyper-post-modernist ontology.

According to the Neoliberal paradigm, corporations have the free speech rights that belong exclusively to humans. The reasons for this are quite straight-forward: the glorification of corporate power endemic to the right wing entails an agenda to ensure corporate power plays a larger role in our Republic than do the individuals of which the rank and file is comprised.

In this deranged scheme, the First Amendment guarantees corporations the right to spend whatever they see fit in order to influence election outcomes. The rationale for this: The right to free speech and voting belongs to Big Business as much as to "The People". These two distinct concepts are thus equated in a conceptual sleight-of-hand.

To state a truism apparently not evident to the Supreme Court's ultra-right-wing ideologues (Scalia, Thomas, Roberts and Alito): Corporations are not humans. (That "moderate" Justice Kennedy capitulated to the above four in the 2010 Citizens United v. FEC decision is another issue. Unlike the above four, he can be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.)

This despicable decision entails that Big Pharma and AHIP, Big Oil, Agri-Business conglomerates, defense contractors, the financial services industry (a.k.a. Wall Street), and right-wing funds like the Scaif Foundation are afforded all the rights that are provided to individual citizens. Corporate power, with its disproportionate influence and consolidated resources, can participate in the electoral process—thereby overwhelming the power of the individual.



Even the most loose interpretation of elementary democratic principles makes it quite clear that corporations are not to be equated with people—that they—as social constructs—are not entitled to the First Amendment’s protections of expressive / participative rights of human beings.

Thomas Jefferson and Paine would be appalled by this latest development. It is hard to imagine a more flagrant undermining of the most fundamental principles of a democratic society. We should be ashamed that these four corporatists sit on the bench of the Judiciary Branch. They are a cancer to our society.