Intro To Political Stockholm Syndrome

If people were to blame the fire department for the fire a group of arsonists had set, we may find such an occurrence befuddling.But when those same people then proceed to call in the arsonists to put out the fire, we know we've gone down the rabbit hole and entered bizarro-world.

Some people may feel that the fire-fighters aren't putting out the fire fast enough.If one is under the impression that fire-fighters who've arrived on the scene aren't working diligently enough, it's seems reasonable to entreat them to work more diligently.However, it seems odd to actually blame THEM for the fire… especially when the reason they aren't extinguishing the flames more expediently is that the arsonists not only set the house of fire, but sabotaged the fire-engines, forced the fire department to use smaller hoses, and set up road-blocks on every street between the fire station and the burning building.

Many have duped into voting for G.O.P. candidates. Some of those people are now complaining about the slow recovery—the recovery, that is, from the economic catastrophe of 2008 (the economic catastrophe the G.O.P. itself caused).Such people are suffering from the political analogue of Stockholm Syndrome.

Other metaphors are illustrative.Imagine: After burning himself on a hot stove-top (when the oven-mitt had been removed from his hand), that the victim is convinced by the gas company that the answer is to turn up the gas on the stove while blaming the burn on the oven-mitt…and not to worry about the hot surface.

That more people may continue to get burned is no deterrent to the gas company, who stands to make yet more money due to the higher gas-bills resulting from the augmented gas-usage.Convincing people to do more of the dysfunctional activity that got them into trouble to begin with seems not to be as difficult a feat as one would think.Propaganda can do marvels."Right-wing economic policy caused this disaster, so if you want to remedy your problems, listen to those peddling MORE right-wing policy, and blame all your woes on those offering left-leaning remedies."The ridiculous logic is swallowed hook, line and sinker by many of the victims of the fall-out from Neoliberalism.

In listening to the absurd ranting of those taken in by right-wing propaganda, we're reminded of an abuse victim becoming enamored with her assaulter—even as she channels her resentment at those trying to help her.This misguided attachment and misguided blame are typical of those who are somehow disoriented, confused, or experiencing some kind of neurosis.Blaming the left-wing for the sluggish recovery of '09-'10 is analogous to blaming the fire-fighters who've arrived on the scene of the burning building.Deciding to vote Republican as a result of this gripe is analogous to hiring the arsonists to put out the fire instead of keeping the fire department on the scene.

The fall-out from the economic collapse—a collapse caused by the right wing—is thereby attributed to the deeds of the LEFT wing.After suffering from the horrible consequences of right-wing economic policy, some people have become infatuated with that same right-wing economic policy.They've been duped into embracing their assailant.They've become enamored with the very things that caused their plight—as if a rape victim seeking refuge with the rapist after the attack.

Observing the flames of the still-burning building, the right-wing segment of the electorate channels their anger at the firemen who've arrived on the scene to save the building.Their solution: Call in the culprits who SET the fire, and depend on THEM to put out the fire.Thus, more gasoline and less water is seen as the solution.

How could such an outlandish thing come to pass?We come to find that the cabal of arsonists have convinced the most credulous and ill-informed victims of the fire that all blame should be placed on the fire department, and that it is only the ARSONISTS who can save the burning building now.

Preposterously, some people believe this fraudulent account.How?Why?When we are frustrated, angry, disoriented and ill-informed, we NEED someone to blame—a direction to channel our resentment.But we won't necessarily know who SHOULD be blamed.We will thus be susceptible to being persuaded to blame the wrong people—even those who offer solutions—while running right back into the arms of those who caused our tribulation.

The explanations all seem to boil down to one factor: lack of information and/or simply being under the impression that false things are true.In other words, it is some combination of being UN-informed and being MIS-informed.The former can be attributed to lack of education and cognitive lethargy.The latter can be attributed to the mentally lazy and the credulous being taken in by right-wing propaganda.

One is reminded of a patient dying of lung cancer, caused by smoking, who has gone to the medical doctor—a doctor who is trying to help his dire situation by prescribing treatments for his ailment.Imagine that he is somehow convinced (by the cigarette companies) that the cigarette companies offer the best solutions to his problem.He thus resuming his smoking, even as the medical doctor insists that he wean himself off of the nicotine.The doctor is subsequently blamed by the patient for his cancer…simply because the treatments haven't cured the cancer…which continues as his lungs continue to be filled with tar.

"More smoking!" the Millerites insist, "…is what will solve your problems.Behold, the doctor hasn't eliminated the cancer, so blame HIM for the lung damage."It never occurs to the patient that he needs to STOP SMOKING in order for the doctor's prescriptions to be effective.He's too busy being angry about the cancer that he simply yearns for someone to blame.The cigarettes are fulfilling, and the medical doctor—who is prescribing all these un-enticing-sounding things—is standing before him, ready to be blamed for the medical problems.He temporarily cut back on the cigarettes, but blames the continuation of the cancer to the cut-backs—and attributes the ailment to the treatment.He will thus look for the enticing solutions offered by his new friends: the cigarette companies.

The parallels with the right-wing movement's sentiments regarding their economic woes couldn't be more salient.The corporatists have seduced them.A case-study is the reaction on the "right" to Obama's Keynsian stimulus after his election.The stimulus, it was clearly shown, WORKED…and, if anything, should have been much larger (a larger stimulus would have worked even better).YET…strangely, certain people have been convinced by right-wing propaganda that the stimulus DIDN'T work.They are thus persuaded to advocate for a resurgence of Neoliberalism: more of the very thing that caused the problems in the first place.

If this is not an analogue of Stockholm Syndrome, then nothing is.